

5  
TUESDAY  
3

# THEATRE

NOVEMBER 1981

ISSN 1135-95

a u s t r a l i a

OPERA  
THEATRE  
DANCE  
FILM  
MUSIC  
FRANKLY  
THINKING



RODNEY FISHER  
LIFE AND ART  
OPERA'S GHETTO  
MENTALITY  
JOHN HARGREAVES



The Sydney Theatre Company  
presents

# CHINCHILLA

figures in  
a classical landscape with ruins  
by Robert David MacDonald

directed by  
**RODNEY FISHER**

SETTINGS BY  
**BRIAN THOMSON**

COSTUMES BY  
**ROGER KIRK**

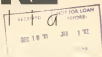
Starring  
**PETER CARROLL**  
**NEIL FITZPATRICK**  
**JENNIFER HAGAN**  
**JANE HARDERS**

with  
Peter Couzens  
Under Cropper  
Frank Garfield  
Scott Higgins  
Matthew O'Sullivan  
Robert Van Mackelenberg

**SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE Drama Theatre**  
**November 10 to December 19**

# THEATRE

a u s t r a l i a



## CONTENTS

November 1988, Volume 6, No. 3



### THEATRE

COMMENT	1
INFO	4
SHOWBUZZ	7
A LIFE IN THE DAY OF FRANK THIRING/ <i>Kate Legge</i>	9
THREEPENNY OPERA/ <i>Gas Works</i>	11
ARTS SPONSORSHIP AWARDS	12
EXPANSION AT THE Q/ <i>Barry O'Connor</i>	13
RODNEY FISHER/ <i>Tom Barclay</i>	14
DORLEEN CLARKE/ <i>Michael Morley</i>	17
INTERNATIONAL: NZ/ <i>Roger Hall</i> /USA/ <i>Karl Levens</i> / UK/ <i>Irving Wardle</i> /ITI	19
REVIEWS: ACT/NSW/QLD/SA/TAS/VIC/WA	24
GUIDE/All that's happening this month in theatre	28



### OPERA

INFO	41
THE GHETTO MENTALITY/ <i>Jayne Macdonnell</i>	42
INTERNATIONAL: BAYREUTH/ <i>John Curmod</i>	44
REVIEW/NSW/ACT/ <i>Kris Mueller</i>	46
GUIDE/What's on this month in opera	48



### DANCE

INFO	49
ABORIGINAL DANCE IN AMERICA/ <i>All Styles</i>	50
REVIEW/NSW/SA/ <i>Shirleybridge</i>	52
GUIDE/This month's dance happenings	54

Ford, Theng



### FILM

INFO	55
JOHN HARGREAVES/ <i>Elizabeth Riddell</i>	56
A GREAT OPPORTUNITY — KATHLEEN NORRIS/ <i>Elizabeth Riddell</i>	58
REVIEW/ <i>Killing of Angel Street</i> / <i>Elizabeth Riddell</i>	59
GUIDE/Watch For These	60



### MUSIC

THE AVANT GARDE AND WAGNER/ <i>Fred Blanks</i>	61
--	----



### BOOKS

DOCUMENTS TO STUDY/ <i>John McCulloch</i>	63
THE SPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD	64



# EYES OF THE WHITES

by Tony Strachan

directed by Neil Armfield

designed by Bill Haycock

with John Posikei Alex, Ron Becks, Roslyn Bobom,  
Christine Mahoney, Kerry Walker, Peter Whitford

NIMROD downstairs



**Bull on Christmas:** I can hardly wait till March.

## NO END OF BLAME by Michael Morley

If there is one quality that has always distinguished John Gaden's performances it is the intelligence that informs his work on the stage. A necessary requirement, perhaps, for an actor who has played Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the philosophical figure in Tom Stoppard's *Jaspers*. That this strength is no mere and refined stylistic intuition is, however, borne out by his other roles: a marvellous partner to Robyn Archer in *Kohlhaas*; Kuffler, or his equally notable contributions in comic roles. And, in fact, it is precisely this combination of comic insight and intellectual substance that he is looking for in the production for the STC of Howard Barker's *No End of Blame*.

He sees the play as "a comic metaphor for one's attempts to come to terms with the world through his art or, rather, through his creative response to it. This problem is located not only in the figure of Belo but also in the ideological and aesthetic confrontation between himself and Grigor. This may sound a little high-flown and idealist, but the problem with Barker's play is to convey to an audience both the seriousness of the play's debate and the black comedy of many of its situations."

As director, Gaden has found himself particularly intrigued both by the storyline of the work — loosely based on aspects of the life and character of the poet/artist, Yeats — and by the way in which Barker provides both actor and audience with the theatrical realisation of apparently intractable ideological material. "One can talk about themes like the passage from nature to artifice; the claims of socialist realism vs the 'artistic, personal' impulse; the tension between art that harms rather than heals; then antagonism rather than reconciliation. These are all present in the play. Barker's achievement is, through his comic vision, to express the plurality of such attitudes towards art and society."

But how will audiences tackle this sort of material? "Well, if the actors are any indication with enthusiasm. At the beginning some were frankly quite diffident, but by the end of the second week that had gone, and I hope that the energy and weight of the debate and the comedy of Barker's writing will now communicate itself to an audience."

## SYDNEY FESTIVAL LINE-UP

The 1982 Festival of Sydney music and drama programs will be a busy month for music and theatre audiences.

Headed the bill of more than 30 theatrical events, ranging from the experimental to the classical will be attractions such as The Black Theatre of Prague which has mesmerised and influenced a theatrical generation, Steven Berkoff's renowned London Theatre Group in his stunning interpretation of the Edgar Allan Poe classic, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of *Scrooge* — based on the life and genius of the poet Sir Thomas — and The Festival of Sydney Playwrights which again in association with the Ensemble Theatre will premiere four new plays by Australian writers.

## MUSHROOM AT THE PRAM

Despite what you might have heard, it isn't the end of the Pram Factory — yet. The APG may have gracefully bowed out, but while the struggle over permits and development applications goes on (The Historic Buildings Committee has stepped in, and there's a chance the whole thing may fall through) the venue remains viable — The Mushroom Troupe has temporarily taken over the Foster Theatre, and will hold the first all Christmas at least, with the world premiere of Neil Gaiman's *Song of Love & Lounge Suite*.



John Gaden



David Reynolds at the STC's Barrow



## A FUNNY THING IN PERTH

UK (Theatre) Productions, Perth's newest theatre company, has hired Noel Farrow to play in *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*. Farrow will take the role of Parolus, the MC/slave, who finally won his freedom. Actor/director, Jerry McNair directs the show. Peter Bands is musical director and Barry Smeagh is choreographer.

Noel Farrow's most recent stage appearances have been in another Southwestern piece, *Sailin' Sailin' Southwestern* in 1977, and recently in *Big Daddy* in the QTC's *Car On A Hot Tin Roof*. He comes to Perth direct from filming a pirate musical with *Star Line* star, Christopher Atkins, and Kirby McClell.

## NOTES FROM OS

Following Hampstead Theatre's production of Stephen Sondheim's *Travlers* in London, Warner Bros picked a production rights option of the play for David Patterson.

London's Tricycle Theatre mounted a successful production of David Allen's *Close With Herbs*. Press comments included "a little gem of an evening."

— *Financial Times* "the most extraordinary small show to preview to be seen in London." — *Sunday Telegraph* "David Allen's remarkable play." — *Times* The production was invited to the Toronto Festival where the Off-Broadway rights have been picked up.

## DISCO PUPPETS

What could be described as the year's most innovative use of puppets occurs five nights a week at Sydney's multi-million dollar disco, *Jamieson Street*.

Since last April metro-high rod puppets, based on designs by the *Dark Telegraph*'s political cartoonist, Paul Zanetti, have provided the "live" entertainment at the exclusive club entrepreneur Barry Wynn fashioned from an old tram electrification shed.

The puppets, created by the Marionette Theatre of Australia's puppet-maker Ross Hill, and more recently, Kim Rylie, include such notables as Neville Wran, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, Joan Sutherland, Miss Williams and John Singleton. At show time, the disco dance floor is cleared and the puppets descend on a \$20,000, specially constructed, collapsible stage.

Steve Johnson

As presented by the Sydney Theatre Company  
1980-1981 season is a 10-week season of 10 plays

# Savage Love

Produced and Directed by  
**PRAM FACTORY**  
301 Queenscliff, Darlinghurst  
Tel: 061 4 401 01 01 or 01 01 01 01  
Box office 061 4 401 01 01 or 01 01 01 01

### LITTLE PARCH THEATRE INC. ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Professional & Amateur theatre companies & individual actors  
Acting, directing, producing, writing, set design, lighting, costumes, props, puppets

Perth are some distinguished people involved in our work during term time for games, club time, and school holidays. Little Parch Theatre Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation in partnership with the City of Perth.

Details of the Little Parch Theatre Inc. include:

- Creating and managing (off-site) companies
- Selecting members - one year and contract members
- Creating and managing (off-site) companies

REPRESENTATIVE: LITTLE PARCH THEATRE INC.

The Little Parch Theatre Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation in partnership with the City of Perth. It is a not-for-profit organisation in partnership with the City of Perth.

Commercial and artistic production and management

Box office 061 4 401 01 01 or 01 01 01 01

# The Drama Studio

## 1 YEAR ACTING COURSE

## 2 YEAR INSTRUCTOR/DIRECTORS COURSE

Classes run 5 nights a week from 8pm - 10pm (approx). 3 terms of 12 weeks each year.

Applications to audition for the 1982 intake are now closed. Auditions held in November and January.

For a prospectus contact:

The Director  
The Drama Studio, Sydney, Ltd  
P.O. Box 291  
Woolwich NSW  
Sydney N.S.W.  
Telephone (02) 321 3762

# LETTERS

## RESPONSE TO STEEL

I refer to "Theatre Feteaux" (*Theatre Australia* September 1981) in which you interviewed Mr Anthony Steel on his role as Artistic Director of the AETT.

In the article you comment, "... Steel is happy for the Trust to maintain, for instance, tours of overseas productions of quality, but which no other organisation would back. A case for cases is the case of the Sadlers' Wells Ballet (through of their second company) which the Brisbane Arts Centre requested — waiting for some reason an English company to open the new complex."

I should like to make it quite clear that at no time has the Queensland Performing Arts Trust planned to open its Complex with "an English Company". The Sadlers' Wells Royal Ballet, or any other one? It has always been my view and the view of my Trust that Australian performers should open the complex in Queensland. However, some time ago it was proposed that a major English performing company should be incorporated within the 1983 Commonwealth Games Arts Festival, as part of the UK's contribution to the Commonwealth Games.

As the opening of the Games co-incides (more or less) with the proposed scheduled opening of the Complex, it was logical for the AETT to bare that venue for the Sadlers' Wells Royal Ballet — but not for the opening performance. For your information, the Sadlers' Wells Royal Ballet is presently booked into the Complex following performances comprising predominantly Australian content.

**Tom Gault,**  
Director, Queensland Performing Arts Trust

While the Arts Council, operating in all States and Territories in Australia, is happy to have publicity, we refute the statement by Anthony Steel in the September issue that we are "more used to touring small shows around to village halls" (than in supplying product to the new Arts Centres).

To take two examples supporting our contention — in Western Australia at the moment, all three State companies are touring on behalf of the Arts Council, hardly an indication of parish pump performances in South Australia, the discussion paper setting out the policy directions and guidelines for the Regional Cultural Centre Trusts states "each Trust shall form an Arts Activities Advisory Committee whose members will

include members of the Arts Council of South Australian branches within the Region".

This surely indicates a belief in the continuing role of the Arts Council in the new structure. Indeed, since the paper was drawn up, the Arts Council now has representatives on all four Regional Trusts, and other members of the Trusts have often been involved with branches of the Arts Council.

I hope that these examples of State Governments' confidence in the Arts Council will persuade Mr Steel that we are competent and willing to supply product to the new Arts Centres, in many cases with the AETT, a partnership which has occurred so often in the past.

**Jim Nash,**  
Federal Administrator, Arts Council of Australia

I was very interested in your interview with Anthony Steel published in the September issue.

Anthony's concern about the independent use of arts centres out of capital costs is very timely. However, I take grave exception to his comment that "the question has outgrown the Arts Councils, who are more used to touring small shows around to village halls". The Victorian Arts Council welcomes the advent of the new arts centres in our State — many of which have been built or upgraded as a response to pressure from Arts Council branches.

The Victorian Arts Council regularly matches the demands of these centres, regularly comes up with ideal tour circuits (without the use of computers, but with the thorough bank of information we have built up over eleven years).

We are also very proud of the product we offer outside Melbourne, representing as it does the cream of arts available from State companies and other Australian and overseas sources.

We frequently request to collaborate with other companies and managements in mounting product designed specifically for our circuits. Many of these productions have been "sold off" to other intimate commercial and educational managements for presentation in such "village halls" as the Adelaide Festival Centre, Opera Theatre, Adelaide, Princess and Comedy Theatres, Melbourne, Twelfth Night Theatre, Brisbane and the Severn Centre in Sydney.

**Don Mackay,**  
Executive Director, Victorian Arts Council



**Catch a rising star**

We've been playing to audiences for over five years, and are one of the longest running shows around!

We set the scene with the most in-depth news coverage of the gay community. Our interviews, special features and international reporting bring you involved as well as aware of events in Australia and throughout the world. We celebrate the performance with comprehensive reviews of music, theatre and art.

**Catch a rising star. See the hottest show in town. Subscribe to CAMPAIGN — Australia's best!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Send cheque/bank money order payable to CAMPAIGN and mail to:  
P O Box 311, Brookfield Hill, NSW 2000. 12 issues \$18.00 24 issues \$36.00 **74**



# SHOWBUZZ

by Norman Kessel

The current Melbourne Theatre Company production of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* will not now be toured by the Melbourne Theatre Trust. Instead, the Trust, as it is with the MTC show, will be "associated" with a separate production by the Queensland Theatre Company and "physically involved" with another by the Sydney Theatre Company to be staged next year at the Theatre Royal.

No announcement at time of writing, but I hear the STC 1982 program will also include Kaufman and Hart's *You Can Take It With You* (Helen Norman in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*) and a David Hare play which the author will come to Australia to direct.

A long, interesting tap line ahead for the 22 dancers chosen for Michael Edgley International's local production of the American stage version of TV's *Sevens Street*. Final auditions for American choreographer Diane Arnold will be held Nov 23 and rehearsals start Dec 7.

American entrepreneur **Cher Bono** (not Cheryl Starkman) will bring her elaborate Las Vegas show here next month, to Sydney's Capitol on Nov 24 and Melbourne's Palace on Dec 4. She is slated for only two performances at each venue, but I've no doubt there's the usual "top the show" dates for "by public demand" come shows and that they will guarantee. In Vegas Cher has a company of 26 and wears 11 costumes costing up to \$40,000 each and at \$40 a ticket plus tax she's the dearest show in town. Here, however, tap price will be a modest \$18.40.

Peter Williams will direct a revival of Roger Hall's public arena or small up, *Alternative* at Sydney's Philip Street Theatre from Nov. 12 to Dec. 23. With Michael O'Keefe designing, cast is John Cleiman, Kevin Collopy, Gordon Glenwright, Lyn Collingwood, Les Amussen, Guy Mulcahy and Paul Smith. Tickets at \$16 include a champagne and chicken supper. Williams says 20,000 saw the South Australian Arts Council presentation at the Seymour Centre in June, 1980 and that there must be another 20,000 who also want to see it.

Earlier-than-expected-for folding off-line left the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust with responsibility for the rest of Sydney. *His Majesty's* until January, I'm told, at something like \$20,000 a week. An issue is being offered by Peter Williams, who is prepared to put in for Christmas his production of *A Brief for Foreman*



Robert Ryan - for STC Shakespeare



Diane Cilento - revivals' *Platonov*



Christopher Peck Williams

which played to capacity at Sydney's Marion Street Theatre earlier this year.

Other Williams projects include *Goldfish* and the *Three Bears* at Philip Street from Nov 24 to Dec 19 with Kippie Evers and Arthur O'Neill in the title role and Arthur Polking, Les Amussen and Clifford Wallace as the bears. Kippie, incidentally, has her eye on the role of Lousie in the upcoming revival here of *Oktoberfest*.

Next February-March Williams will present Neil Simon's *God's Favorite*, based on the Book of Job. *Macbeth* in *Rehearsal* for school audiences and possibly also his deferred production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* And on the personal grapevine I hear he has a November date at the Theatre Royal for the long-delayed *Platonov* with Diane Cilento still possible as the star.

Philip Street Theatre will again be the venue for the Ensemble Theatre's third annual contribution to the Festival of Sydney. Retitled this year as the Festival of Playwrights the four plays are Jan 5-9 *Judith Sussman*, by Judith Fleming, author of last year's highly successful *Manon*; Jan 12-16 *Conscience*, by John Synge, who worked on the scripts of *Street Horrors*; Jan 19-23 *Five Cents About The Sun*, by A. Craig Canning; Jan 26-30 *The Right Man* by Ken Ross. Producers are Judith Johnson and Anne Morgan, but the producers or last year named, Simon is sponsored by Quanta.

The Ensemble itself is looking for a temporary home for the six months or so from next April or May while Stage 10 is rebuilding program proceeds. It had been hoped to stay put while this went on, but it has proved impracticable. Philip Street Theatre was favoured but was quickly abandoned when recently events revealed a constraint that gave a right of censorship to the church authorities that control the premises.

Actor John Dennis, whose brilliant evocation of the life and works of national poet G.D. Dennis in his one-man show, *More Than A Sentimental Shole* has aroused interest in the Laureate of the Barren, in carrying the word still further afield. Under the management of Bill Wilson he is now touring Tasmania to be followed by country circuits in Victoria and later, all being well, South Australia and Queensland.

Actress Valerie Newstead has joined the board of The Players Theatre Company, still gallantly afloat the Festival Theatre, Bondi, where she is appearing with Vincent Ball, Page Dornakhan and May Pacey in the current production of *Emily Williams' The Core is Given*, directed by Donna Harrop. Incidentally, Valerie's own company, Moss Productions, has been given a further grant for film script development by Michael Carr of a play she has long been associated with, *Mary Swindell's Same Difference*.



# A LIFE IN THE DAY OF FRANK THRING

by Kate Legge

Frank Thring prefers the word "one", to the personal pronoun "I".

Like the dark glasses, the deep voice, the devastating sarcasm and the passion for pendants and black dress, this trait is part and parcel of the Thring package — but who knows what's inside?

The public image projects a sort of satanic power that people describe as something larger than life. And look at the adjectives the press have used to capture his presence: "an imposing midget", "deliciously outrageous", "immaculate", "amusing", "the master", "the aura", "overpowering", etc, etc.

After the praise comes the pepper, quote after quotable quote. Such good copy. Wicked wit sprinkled liberally on to the printed page. And then there is the inevitable toying and taking over the house he has decorated in his indelible style.

Two large white concrete lions guard the entrance. His dining room table set with crystal, china and silver, forever, a la Miss Havisham. Black carpets, black walls, mirrors and zebra skins. A handsome houseboy and the sleek samosa.



But despite the publicity, his privacy has been preserved. And now that the performer no longer needs to promote his work, he is playing even harder to get.

The Melbourne Theatre Company spent two weeks tracking him down. Frank Thring might not need previews but the company certainly does. So with kid gloves and pliantive pleas, he was coaxed into allowing the chosen few to come and see a new pendant that was designed especially for his well padded chest.

Desperate to find out what the one man show, *Frank's Thing* was all about, members of the press crept up to the door of his Toorak home and timidly presented themselves for inspection, tape recorders and notebooks well concealed, with nothing but admiration for the set of silver jewelry bedded down in velvet bags at one end of the room.

Who said anything about the show? No one wanted to be cut down like one poor late-comer. Mr Thring spotted at the gate. "What pathetic hound of the press is that tottering up the drive?" he roared. Then the cat got upset with all the commotion and for a minute it looked as if even the pendant display would be put away.

Once the white wine began to take effect, Mr Thring was a little more co-operative. He posed with his new pendant, ring and god knows what else while the cameras went clicking click and then turned to the spectators standing on shaky ground. "Now whose doing what to whom?"

Whether it was the wine or the strain of it all, Mr Thring was looking the worse for wear, even with the dark glasses shading three quarters of his face. For the last few weeks he has been tapping out a book to be published in March or April next year.

He refuses to discuss it, except to say that the process of writing was painless. "I write when I feel like writing. If I have a deadline to meet, it is met. I'm a professional journalist," he said, referring to a stint as theatre critic for *The Argus* way back in 1955.

In a fortnight's time he begins rehearsing *Frank's Thing* with director, John Sumner. There will be no script. "Each night will be different. It's not going to be glamorous like *Benji*, *McKibbin*, or *Barry Humphries*. I'm not spending the whole evening in suspenders belts. More of a quiet little family affair. Certainly not *The Rock: The Big Horror Show*.

Although nothing has been written yet, he intends to perform a selection of pieces that will stay the same from night to night. "They won't be from plays, because most of the plays I've wanted to do I've done. They will be things that don't fit into plays. Things that I would like to share with the audience. Obviously I can't stick in something from the middle of *Hamlet*."

"Pieces of literature that one enjoys. I will recite them to the audience and see if they like them too. It'll be very relaxed."

No doubt Mr Thring will be on his best behaviour. That is of course providing the audience do not invade his privacy.

Although the sole sound very informal and the format almost intimate, on stage the public image will stay intact. Does it ever come undone? When he's at home does he tear off the pendant, the dark glasses and the black uniform and pad around the house in jeans and an open neck shirt, or invite the neighbours in for afternoon tea?

No. Like Greta Garbo, Frank Thring wants to be left alone. "I have to have privacy to work, otherwise one achieves nothing. I very rarely go out. I can't ever go to the city because I'm driven mad by people."

Pursuing the theme of a day in the life of Frank Thring proved difficult. The answers became monosyllabic, while the pauses threatened to cancel out further communication.

"We're not going to get anywhere with this. There's no such thing as a typical day in the life of Frank Thring. Forget the question."

I didn't.

"My days don't match each other. Obviously, I'm a long nighter when I'm working in the theatre. When I'm up filming at five in the morning I'm asleep most."

"I do a lot of reading. One has to do a lot of reading to find out what goes on around the rest of the world."

What do you read?

"Look. This could go on for twenty minutes. *The New York Times*. *The London Times*. *The Observer*. *Play and Pictorial*. *Life*. *Time* and *Fortune*, *Night and Sound*. It just goes on," he said and stopped short.

"When I'm at home I cook Chinese food. I watch TV only when I'm paid to write about it." (Only ten minutes before he had delivered a diatribe in authoritative tones on the "dreadful" standard of Australian television to a



reporter from *71 Week*.) He conceded to watching an old Hollywood film every now and then.

Is he still interested in contemporary theatre?

"I see what vaguely interests me."

What was the last thing he saw?

"*The Day After*."

His opinion?

"Excellent."

Nevertheless, Mr Thring professes to live on theatre. "If I couldn't go on acting I'd die. If I was physically incapacitated by cancer or syphilis, which is quite likely, then one goes into the renaissance. If you can't do it, write about it."

Overcast trips are not of the question. "I'm tired of travelling. All I want is a perfectly quiet Toorak house in Melbourne, where I can live in absolute peace. Providing they stop those fucking helicopters," he said, scowling at the omnipresent signs of CHOGM security.

What will happen to Frank Thring when *Frank's Thing* is over?

"Collapse in a huddled heap. I should think."

# spotlight

## THE THREEPENNY OPERA

*The Threepenny Opera* will be the State Theatre Company of SA's first Brecht production. Director, **GEORGE WHALEY** and Musical Director, **MICHAEL MORLEY**, talked to **GUS WORRY** about their approach.

*What about the Threepenny Opera at the STC's first Brecht?*

Because, they agree, it is a popular play, a challenge it tackled in the right spirit, and because it contains "some of the best theatre music ever written". Other works had been considered: *Muskele Courage*, *Gallileo*, *The Good Person of Seandhu* — but such works were difficult to cast, impossible to rehearse properly in a month without an ensemble company. In Whaley's opinion, Brecht still has to be "absorbed" by actors and audiences. In Australia, and a well-cast *Threepenny Opera* is a good grounding piece in this respect.

*It could sometimes be considered a "safe" choice?*

Some might be tempted to think so, is the cautious reply, but there is daring in the *Threepenny Opera* if approached in the right way, in the music, for example, suggests Morley. He points out that John Willent "While my money talks as much sense about Brecht as anybody" locates the revolutionary impact of the piece in the music itself, because the music, perhaps more successfully than the satire or the structure of the play, sets out to dismantle all the accepted notions of "highbrow art" opera in particular.

Weill and Brecht have contributed significantly to a subversive trend which began with Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale* and the introduction of jazz into twentieth century European awareness, and which still goes on.

*What are the waters of your interest in Brecht?*

Whealey's answer comes in three stages, first as an actor, then as a

teacher of acting students, and then as a director. Morley responds to the special relationship between Brecht's "poetry" and the music which has been written for it by Weill, Dessau, Isler and others.

*Your book has been involved in production of Brecht's work before — were other productions here and overseas, what are the pitfalls?*

An immediate response from Whaley "Brecht isn't as serious and somber as many well-meaning directors and performers have thought". He thinks back to the "early days" and the university productions, which were presented for the politics of the plays, and points out that for Brecht's politics was the stimulus for his genius. For his imitators it merely serves as a crutch for inadequacy.

Morley wants to avoid the "uniform greyness" which has resulted from productions associated with "theory". He also wants to avoid the proscription approach to Brecht if it doesn't fit out it off (Brecht himself used this image, taken from a Chaplin film, in which Chaplin deals with an overall suitcase, to describe what had happened to his theatre). He is sure that this production won't be "lost" and clipped off at the end. The awkward bits should be left there to stick "like cherry pips, to be chewed over" he says.

*Have there been unworkable productions?*

"Yes. Aubrey Meller's *Muskele Courage* with Kerry Walker as MCI. John Gaden's trouble in Ken Hooper's production", says Whaley. "Yes. Ted Hodgeman's in the MTC's *Janus* (I)". says Morley. "I though I had strong reservations about the music... I thought the approach to the play was spot on."

Both point out that Brecht, like any major playwright reconstructed treatment everywhere, even at the Berliner Ensemble. Whaley has been thrilled there by the economy of thought and the precision of activity. Morley "threw to the point of total idiom" by carbon-copy reproduction of 1929's material. The aim of this production is to get to the "energy and the bite" of the work.

*To Morley: How do you get the laugh and even, quiver out of the performers as well as the music? Does the water present particular problems for this production?*

"First of all try and persuade the

actors that they are not singing musical comedy, and secondly persuade them that singing on stage is not really divorced from speaking on stage, especially using the same sort of total quality in the voice and an awareness of phrasing." This is the immediate reply to the first question. For actors in English-speaking countries, Brecht and Weill can even be approached via Gilbert and Sullivan, he says, because the words are always crucial in British songs. Gilbert and Sullivan teaches actors to observe melody and at the same time work around it whilst making the words totally comprehensible. As for the score, it is difficult and demands singers and musicians who want to make "a pleasant sound".

The music has to be tuneful, but "pleasant" is not exactly useful in Brecht's theatre. So the band has to be careful not to "iron-out" the sound. It also has to be careful not to "iron-out" the actor-singers. Even with a cut-down seven-piece band actors will have real competition and so (pace Brecht) the musicians on this occasion have been consigned to the pit which ought to make it an equal contest.

*To Whaley: Has the plot lost some of its satirical bite? Does it need to be compressed to sharpen the aspect of the argument?*

The answers are "Yes" and "No" respectively, but the approach is positive. In his production of the work at NIDA, Whaley relocated it to Sydney at the time of the opening of the Bridge. It works, he said surprisingly well, with the odd change of word or phrase, and the addition of a Prologue in Adelaide (since there is no Bridge) the play will be performed as translated by Willent and Manheim. Whaley does not see this as a work of broadside satire, but feels that the satiric and post-satiric at hypocrisy (secular and religious), class and economic inequities, double-standards and corruption will no doubt find their mark.

This production, it seems, will not be over-reverent. Its directors intend to tackle the piece with a straightforwardness which acknowledges roughness and inconsistency, strength and weakness. It may even manage to show the *Threepenny Opera* as "a brilliant, but by no means flawless, distraction," for this says John Willent, is what it was and is.

# spotlight

## ARTISTIC ENDS BY CORPORATE MEANS

*W.M.A.M. is a joint initiative between  
Miles and I with the support of four major  
sponsors, W.M.A.M. is a unique unit*

*John Fox and Jack Spratt at W.M.A.M.  
a month later*

The Business in the Arts Awards exist to recognise outstanding examples of corporate support for the arts and thus encourage growth in sponsorship and other assistance. The Awards (sponsored by Mobil Australia) are now in their fourth year. What have they achieved? Are they worth the effort?

It is hard to demonstrate the direct benefits of any award or prize — whether it be for the most efficient car or the best portrait. Yet, it is unarguable that competitions create public and media interest. They focus attention.

A recent survey shows that corporate support of the major arts organisations in this country has grown tenfold during the last five years. The main recipients have been public galleries, festivals and opera companies. However, there is also an emerging trend to assist dance and theatre companies. In total corporate support now exceeds \$10 million annually.

Can the Business in the Arts Awards claim any credit? Maybe yes. At least they were working on the right cause at the right time.

The Awards were the brainchild of ARTS Ltd — Arts Research Training and Support Ltd. This organisation was established in 1977 and exists

to bring private sector skills and resources to the arts. It does this in three ways: by carrying out management consulting assignments for major arts organisations, running courses and publishing booklets on art management, and counselling arts organisations seeking support and corporations interested in providing it. The Awards were established to focus attention on this last activity.

The Awards have certainly achieved some standing. His Excellency the Governor General, Sir Zelman Cowen, has presented them each year — in Sydney in 1978, Melbourne 1979, Adelaide 1980 and Sydney again this year. Brisbane is on the calendar for 1982. The Panel of Judges for the Awards, chaired by Mr S. Basilios Myer this year, has included people such as Professor Geoffrey Blainey, Sir Andrew Grimwade, Mr Kym Berrington, The Hon Gough Whitlam — all notable public figures with a commitment to the arts. Mr Myer comments: "It is a pleasure to help this project and encouraging to see the growth of corporate interest in the arts."

The 43 recipients of Awards and Honourable Mentions from the first three years represent a wide range of companies. Some are large like BHP, which supported a tour by the SGO Theatre to remote parts of Queensland. Others are small like Emerald Trading Pty Ltd which initiated the Castlemeane Festival in Victoria. A few are in heavy industry. For example, Sabena Pty Ltd in Western Australia gives annual painting and sculpture awards for workers in the construction industry. Others are in the service sector. The State Savings Banks of South Australia has supported various South Australian Festivals. Some companies are transnational. Calixa Oil (Australia) Pty Ltd sponsored performances by Papi Sloom Ltd in remote centres and other children's institutions. Many like A. W. Reiderstone Pty Ltd, which helped the State Opera of South Australia, are local.

ARTS Ltd has established four Award categories for 1982. First, previous recipients of Awards and Honourable Mentions will compete against each other in the "previous winner" category. The second category — open to those who have not previously been recognised — is for



support of the arts in the work-place. This category is new. It has been added to focus attention on the opportunity for companies to help in this area. The third category is for support of the arts in country towns and rural areas. The fourth category is for support of the art elsewhere.

Some people imagine that Award recipients must have given huge sums of money to the arts. To the contrary, the level of financial support is not a criterion. The judging panel looks for such things as: what was novel about the way the support was provided, which new audiences were reached because of the support; what new or permanent artwork was created; whether the support made possible a unique artistic experience; if the project fitted the commercial objectives of the supporting company; the extent to which employees were involved.

In some cases Award recipients have provided little if any financial support but helped in many other ways—with publicity and staffing, use of premises and so on. The race is to the artist rather than the cash!

Dr Timothy Pascoe, as National Director of A.R.T.S. Ltd, established the Awards project. He sees a strong future for corporate support. "Corporations are beginning to look more widely at their responsibilities within the community. Also, more of them are recognising that art sponsorship can help to build corporate image. The benefits to the arts go beyond the support they receive. It gives them a chance to get their message across to a powerful group in the community, which they normally do not reach. It's a good sponsorship programme, both sides benefit, learn from each other and the relationship endures."

Which companies will be the recipients this year? As in previous years, the nominations from arts organisations around Australia include a fascinating array of support programmes. Will it be a company that has supported Nimrod, The Playbox Theatre or the Sydney Theatre Company, or a supporter of the Victorian State Opera or the International Piano Competition? The arts need all the support and attention they can get these days and the Awards certainly encourage it. The 1981 Awards will be presented on the 16th of this month.

# spotlight

## EXPANSION AT THE Q

by Barry Dixon



Q's Artistic Director, Donna Warburton

Penrith's Q Theatre is expanding. Faced with turning customers away at the door, the Q management has decided to increase the seating capacity of their Penrith homebase from its existing 120 to a more accommodating 300.

That is a remarkable event in the light of the present economic climate, and in view of the fact that the Sydney Theatre Company has just lost its claim to series. Watch Bay for extra storage and an experimental theatre space. Fortunately for the Q, however, they received a grant of \$49,669 for next year. The real angel is the Penrith Local Council, who are paying up \$70,000. All the Q now has to do is raise the money to equip and outfit the projected extension to their present building. All, indeed.

The present building is the old Railway Institute Building located in Railway Street, Penrith, just along from the Penrith Railway Station. The hall had been traditionally used for School of Arts

activities, Bingo, and excursions. The atmosphere was right anyway, and the Q, which had spent twenty years at Circular Quay providing functional theatre for Sydney's office workers, moved in.

Now in their fifth year in Penrith, the Q serves the Western Region of Sydney, touring their usual five play subscription season in far out as Orange and as close as a Bankstown. This season *Parade* on *Parade* established new territory by transferring to the Seymour Centre before going on a tour of Tasmania.

Artistic Director and founder Donna Warburton is committed to taking theatre to the people. That may sound somewhat grandiose, but Donna Warburton started with Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop fame, and those are two ladies who take the theatre's mission very seriously. The Q knows its audience, it works with the community and listens to its needs. Schools programmes and workshop classes are just two examples of the Q's public base, which returns dividends in successes like David Mason-Cox's two highly successful rock musicals *St. Mary's Aid* (David is from St. Mary's), and *Another Requested*. This year David is with the company as its playwright-in-residence.

It comes as no surprise that a local architect, E. N. Sharret, is in charge of the new theatre. The intimacy of the existing three-quarter in the second stage will be retained, only the scale will alter. The present space is a very happy acting area. However, the backstage is impossible, and planning was usually the work of resident designer Arthur Hicks are standard, ensuring that actors and audience alike share in the atmosphere of the play.

The Q never patronises its audience, rather they possess a reputation that is worthy of the major companies in the major capitals. Last season there were Shakespeare, Brecht, Pinter and David Williamson. This year Sam Shepard's *Do Not Sell Me This* is running at 11 o'clock. *On the Silver Sea* is soon to come and Herbert's *No Yarns! No Parlor! No Upland!* The *Backstage* has already been. Not long after Sydney audiences were treated to George Whalley's stunning performance in Dario Fo's *The Death of an American*, Penrith audiences could see *My Cousin Sam*. *My Cousin Sam*, another political farce by Dario Fo.

The question is, will it be business as usual at the Q when the first and is turned on the new project? Work is scheduled to begin before Christmas, after the run of *On the Silver Sea*, the next production.

As part of their fund-raising, there will be a "Donations Derby" on December 19, with contributions from the locals and the Q's workshops. This has been hailed off the cuff as a "Christmas Variety Night".

# THEATRE feature ON LIFE

**RODNEY FISHER**, director of Sydney Theatre Co's **CHINCHILLA**, talks about the play and his own life and art, to **ANTHONY BARCLAY**.

**Mike:** Learn the virtues of selfishness, young man. We are not all cut out to be nuns. It is not necessary to starve to be a revolutionary.

**Rya:** Nor is it necessary to be a revolutionary in order to starve.

Rodney Fisher has just returned from the subjective wilderness of New York to start rehearsals on *Chinchilla* his third production for the Sydney Theatre Company. The success of his previous two works for the Company is undisputed: Simon Gray's *Choir of Pity* was the Company's first production to transfer to a commercial season at the Theatre Royal; then Dorothy Hewitt's *The Affair From Midway* a production that many regard as the definitive piece on Hewitt's work to date, one that gave her at last the recognition so many believed in but few thought would ever be translated into the realities of performance.

Fisher began directing student productions while studying at Queensland University. His first professional work was with the Melbourne Theatre Company as a director (*Praedello's Six Characters*) and writer (his play *The Long View* was directed by George Ogilvie). The period 1973-1976 was spent as an assistant-director with the South Australian Theatre Company which included his world premiere production of David Williamson's *The Department* and a smattering of Pinter, Eisen, O'Neill and Jim McNeil. He also devised programmes for touring schools, pubs and shopping centres.

Then Fisher decided to freelance. One quickly gains the impression that this was neither an easy decision nor one that came quickly. But once made,

it became imperative to his sense of artistic development: a matter on which he is emphatic. It is difficult to see any reason why Fisher should think differently on that decision. Indeed, his work has described an upward curve since that time. There has been fruitful collaboration with Williamson (the outstanding production of *The Club* and *A Handful of Friends* — both world premieres) with Margaret Reading (and especially with Robyn Archer (*A Score is Taken* and *Songs From Salskhan* 1981). This year he directed the commercial tour of *The Doctor* (Warren Mitchell, Gordon Chater) for Wilson Morley. Also he directed *Bellevue Letters* 1978, a ballet by Lynn Seymour for the Royal Ballet at Sadlers Wells and for the Bavarian State Opera, Munich. Fisher regards Seymour as one of the finest actresses he has seen and that experience is close at hand as he prepares for *Chinchilla*.

**Chinchilla:** The single-minded concentration of an artist works like a cancer, and passion absorbs utterly... It is the only voice we can still trust in a complicated expensive world.

When Robert David MacDonald's *Chinchilla* *fevered in a classical landscape* with a was had its world premiere at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre in April 1977, Michael Coveney wrote in *Plans and Players* that it was a remarkable piece of theatre to have in the repertoire of British theatre. (For those interested the script is published in the June and July 1977 editions of that magazine.) But then theatregoers had come to expect remarkable things from the Citizens' artistic transmuter of MacDonald, Philip Prowse and Giles Havergal. The thought-provoking sense of an artistic enclave enclosed almost larger than life, if paradoxically, amid the grim social realism of Glasgow slums. A defiant, up-front celebration of performance from classics to punk, spilling over from the theatre to posters, from stage to paper. A willingness to embrace

many areas of culture, an acute self-consciousness about the business of art. A revolution of a kind in theatre.

*Chinchilla* is in so many ways a very beautiful play. Its primary characters are Daghilev, Nyrsky, Messier, Gabriel Aurnee et al. Very much larger than life individuals who not only created a revolution in the world of dance but a revolution that reached across all the arts. The play has obvious echoes of the mood of *Break in Fence*, it has a finely wrought structure of jump-cut scenes that, for some, gives a Proustian sense of time. But the dialogue is almost archly self-conscious as well. MacDonald's Daghilev is in every sense the chinchilla (beside the grey streak in his hair) he is beautiful, rare and vicious, even to the point of consuming his progeny.

The play does not visit the stage so much as the rehearsal room or, if you like, the wings of biography. It is the fall out with Nyrsky, the embrace of Messier, or the discussions about the "scandalous" hunt of masturbation concluding *L'Apres-midi d'un Faune* that are spoken. Private lives are discussed wittily almost brutally, the compass of it all is handled about in an idiom that is unmistakably early seventies.

It could be argued that *Chinchilla* is a comedy in the broadest European sense of the term. If it is very articulate it strikes some as having problems, tensions in its treatment of biography. On the one hand these larger-than-life figures of modern dance are celebrated for their intense artistic energies while on the other they are lacerated for their personal affairs. After one reading of the play I am not so sure that this is an irreconcilable tension. But this is what most preoccupies Fisher at the end of the first day of rehearsal, a matter he discusses without any leading question. He cites the several reworkings of the play by the original company, reworkings where the content of various scenes has moved from muted to outrageous statements of biography. This was also one of the play's seasons in New York in which John Goffredo (this production's *Clonidia*) worked



# AND ART



Rodney Fisher

If the original production delighted Coopers' regulars it undoubtedly many from the world of dance, particularly those who remembered Daughlev. This is not necessarily remarkable in itself. But as Fisher talks he clarifies a fascination with the work. That seems to result in its very self-consciousness, one that gives way not so much to concern as to a self-conscious of the role of the artist in the world at large. Fisher speculates that this could be true of MacDonald et al. The world of Venice and Daughlev, in this particular sense, may not be all that remote from Glasgow.

The choice of *Chinichilla* to complete the STC's second year was very much a matter of company enthusiasm for the play. For Rodney Fisher that enthusiasm combined with a welter of personal reasons. One is a long standing desire to direct a Russian play and *Chinichilla's* Russian origins are characters somewhat in this direction. But more importantly his long term interest in dance is rewarded. That is very much a family matter. Fisher's sister is interested in dance. His father went home from London in the fifties autographed pictures of the leading dancers of the day and these strong childhood memories are now becoming coherent images. He mentions his excitement at being able to watch Melissa rehearsing young dancers. This knowledge of dance culminated in his collaboration with Lynn Seymour on *Intimate Letters* 1978, in London and Munich.

The crossroads of dance and acting is at the heart of the play's concern with Time and its interweaving of Art and Life. Specifically this poses challenges regarding the use of space, the Drama Theatre will be an immense open area of white and the action of the play will transact to moments of suspension in movement to capture the dance-like "logic" of its structure.

Clearly the figure of Daughlev exercises more fascination for Fisher, prior to rehearsal, than the play itself. He mentions that his wide reading must now give way to exploring the substance of the play in rehearsal. But Daughlev is a compelling character. The fact that he, neither royalty nor

noble, almost single-handedly created a whole new system of patronage for the arts is to Fisher an affirmation of looking to the future. The drawing together of many diverse cultural inputs, breaking down traditional barriers between art forms, is one of the beginnings of a modern approach to art. Even the film *Red Shoes*, based loosely on these people, inspired a whole generation to put on their dancing shoes.

A healthy distrust for traditional artistic values and for the structures that surround the arts is what seems to make these people larger than life for Fisher and accounts, in part, for his initial aversion to the abrasive attention given by the play to their private lives. If that seems a little precious Fisher calmly states the obvious point that their private lives were so unfulfilled accounts for the enormous commitment of their energies to their lives in art.

It is a given to claim that individuals involved in the rehearsal of a play may possibly be engaged in a self-conscious (even unconscious) process of self-definition and that this will eventually result in using the play as a point of reference for reflection. Cross or no, these impressions emerged during our conversation. There are, for example, broad points of reference in the way Fisher talks about his need to freelance.

While he accepts company structures as necessary things he quickly points to their capacity to submerge creative energies. One accepts them as perhaps necessary to serving an apprenticeship, and that is inescapably a part of developing one's craft. He refers without any trace of equivocation to less happy periods when the choice of play seemed to involve "The Company", not the individuals working on it. And "individuals" extends here to all those involved in the work — not merely the director or leading actors. This prompts a fairly passionate reference to two specific occasions when this project was blackly personal: freelancing was the slowly arrived at

# feature

decision that liberated him. If 'joy of creativity' and like phrases are not at issue at the moment this does not trouble him.

The current chorus of causes that bestrides our local theatre is of little interest to Fisher. Of course he is not alone here — to some this is at best an attempt to redefine the function of theatre, or at worst a platform for confused, even anachronistic debate of issues sexual and political. If the play's the thing for Rodney Fisher that is not an evasion of the questions that are bandied about at company meetings. The French might indulge in long conversations on the spirituality of theatre, we might not. But whatever our frame of reference it is the promotion of the art that interests us. Thus, Fisher can cite the intensity of moments of shared revelation between actors while rehearsing Dorothy Hewson's *Makropulos* as profoundly personal experience.

In the next breath he unashamedly mentions that if freelancing involves commercial work, then good and well. There is no contradiction here nor is there a lack of critical perspective. Fisher would like to see the barriers between subsidised and commercial theatre dissolve if that is in Sydney a more positive interchange of work between the Royal, Nimrod and the Sydney Theatre Company it could only serve to strengthen theatre. His admiration for the fabric of British theatre — the interlocking of Hall's generation with that of Nunn's — carries no hint of slavish adulation. Simply it expresses a passion for the growth in the quality of work. Behind all that is that often expressed desire to see repertory nurtured and developed locally.

I think the variety of Fisher's work is a testimony to these matters. Aware that not all of this would strike a responsive cord in current debate I

return again to *Caracalla*. Is not MacDonald's treatment of biography an indictment of the characters' evasions of responsibilities by couching their foibles in an authentication that is decadent? (I should add that I personally have little sympathy for my question.) If there is such a point in the play Fisher answers without hesitation that it must ultimately lead to a sense of self-criticism that feeds a wisdom not only into one's life but into the practice of one's art. To be preoccupied with a single line of thinking or even to be part of a steady group of people is to delimit one's responses to the welter of influences available to theatre.

There are so many influences that thrive today and Fisher sees Australia — especially Sydney — as very fortunate in the way that it is exposed to so much. To be responsible to a multiplicity of influence is to keep one's eyes on the future.



DESIGNERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF  
ARCHITECTURAL DEVICES  
POWER FLYING SYSTEMS  
COUNTERWEIGHT SYSTEMS  
STAGE FURNISHINGS  
CURTAINS, CYCLOPAMA, ETC.  
ELECTRO MECHANICAL DEVICES FOR THE  
INDUSTRY  
SPECIAL CONTROL SYSTEMS  
THEATRICAL COMPONENTS

peter albrecht corporation

325 EAST CHICAGO STREET  
MILWAUKEE  
WISCONSIN 53202 USA  
Telephone 414-273-2811  
Telex 26-859 ALBRECHT MIL  
TELEPHONE 414-273-2811  
TELEX 26-859 ALBRECHT MIL

223 PARK STREET  
SOUTH MELBOURNE  
VICTORIA 3206 AUSTRALIA  
TELEPHONE (03) 899 0371  
TELEX 37077 PACAL

# TIME TO BE CREATIVE



Doreen Clarke

Having, as the cliché goes, come late to playwrighting, **DOREEN CLARKE** is certainly making up for lost time: as well as the various productions she speaks of in the interview, two of her plays will appear next year in Currency Press. She spoke of her work with **MICHAEL MORLEY**.

*You have a plan about musical violence. The Sad Songs of Anne Sands, opening in Adelaide in November. It has been a good year for your work, as this will be the fourth of your plays to be produced in Australia in the last twelve months.*

Yes, I've had plays produced in several states this year. *Roses In Dar Season*, which was the first of my plays ever to be produced by Troupe in Adelaide in 1978, was on at Nimrod Downsians. In April *Bleeder River-Joe*, a play about the Depression, had a six week season at Playbox Upstairs. It also had a production in the Northern Territory by the Darwin Theatre Company. In June, towards the end of my stint as playwright-in-residence with the South Australian State Theatre Company, a comedy, a two-hinder set in Queensland, *Forewell Brisbane Ladies*, went on at Theatre 62. That production then toured to Melbourne for a season at Playbox Downsians. Finally, *Roses In Dar Season* had productions last year in Perth and Brisbane, so I have now had plays produced in every state capital in Australia.

*Do you think next year is likely to be as productive a year?*

Well, this year was really the culmination of about four years' work, but I do have some tentative things hanging fire at the moment. A group called "Movement Theatre" are starting up on a special projects grant to do music theatre, as well as some straight plays. We've thrown around a few ideas and I think there's a possibility of doing a musical with the, late next year, about the bombing of Darwin in World War 2. But it's all very tentative at the moment.

As well, I'm interested in community theatre. I'd like to set a performing arts space set up in the Port Adelaide Semaphore area where I live — a "people place", where all kinds of theatrical events and entertainments could take place. Several people are interested in this and are working towards it.

I'm also involved in trying to set up a "Women's Theatre" in SA. The idea came from the Australian Writers' Guild and it is hoped to set up "Women's Theatres" in Melbourne and Sydney as well as Adelaide.

I still have a sort of loose involvement with "Troupe" and perhaps I might write something suitable for them to do next year.

*You have some very strong women characters in your plays and they are often concerned with issues affecting women.*

I think I write about women because, like most writers, I have to draw on my own experiences, or use aspects of my own personality, even while putting myself into someone else's shoes.

*If we can take up that point — one of the things that's and about your writing is that it's very strong in terms of portraying the female characters, but less so in its characterization of the male roles. Do you accept that?*

Yes. For me it's a priority — though that's not quite the word I want — to get a lot of things off my chest about being *me*, being female. And at the time I started to branch out into playwrighting I read a lot of feminist books — which doesn't necessarily make me a strong feminist, though I have got to the stage where I am in front of the television yelling "sexist rubbish!" and things like that. Maybe you get a bit overbalanced at first, I don't think you hate men, you just hate what's being done to women.

For example, I think a lot of middle-aged women are very creative, and have now got how to be creative — and are even to be selfish, because women live with a push thing about taking things away from their families. It's this not putting other people first, putting yourself first — and this is

hard to do because that's not the way you're taught, that's not the way you're conditioned. You're conditioned to serve the family, in a way, and to get your satisfaction through the family, sometimes, to get the satisfaction which is your satisfaction, you have to go against the interests of the other members of the family. But I just left this time is for me — after all, you're over the hill a bit, and you can see the end of the road there in the distance!

*When you started out writing, apart from the fact that you were obviously sitting out of situations which mean something to you and which were a part of your own experience of your own world, were there any writers or experiences that you found you could learn from?*

Well, although I didn't have any theatrical experience, I used to read plays quite a lot. I read the easier ones,

like the musical comedies — this was years ago, when I was in my teens — the easier Shaw plays and J M Barrie, especially. I knew very little about Shakespeare, only what everybody knows. Though when I was 10% — and I remember this vividly — we had a teacher who took us to see *The Merchant of Venice* in Manchester, I think. It was a tremendous experience — I can still remember scenes you know, Portia with the boxes and Jessica and Lorenzo, and those images — which is what theatre's about, after all. He taught us about early theatre, which was amazing for a tiny primary school. We used to go out and dig clay and make the amphitheatres, this was quite surprising in those days, because it was a very conservative education then — though I know they do these things now — and we made these little pagan things out of cardboard, so we did in fact know something about theatrical history.

*You've said you knew so little about the problems of playwrighting — construction, etc. do you think that in the meantime you acquired more understanding from writing and from read and even, or from looking at or reading other plays?*

Well, as soon as I started to take it seriously, I read everything I could get my hands on. Every single thing I mean sometimes it was contradictory, but I just jammed all this information out of books into my head, now every playwrighting I could, because playwrightings are either free or cheap, and as much theatre as we could afford I managed to get to. I think that's necessary when you haven't got the background. I now feel I've acquired a skill, because it's one of those things where actually the writing itself is the learning experience. And probably I do have some talent for dialogue.

## ST MARTINS YOUTH ARTS CENTRE

*Presents*

### A SEASON AT THE PLAYBOX

Opening November 14 Downstairs

THE ITA BUTTROSE MUSICAL

### WHEN LIPS COLLIDE

A PORTRAIT IN BLACK

Music and Lyrics by Geoffrey O'Connell  
and Helmut Baketas Book by Michael Mitchener

Directed by Helmut Baketas

Opening December 5 Upstairs

### THE FLAT A TEMPORARY THING

By Andrew MacPherson Directed by Michael Mitchener

Bookings, Playbox 55 Exhibition St. Melbourne 634888

## Why couldn't they have chosen a nice English play?

by Roger Hall

Local plays are burgeoning in New Zealand, but is it still behind the times? And what of its relationship to Australia: has it become xenophobic in its new dramatic nationalism?

Here NZ's top playwright, and winner of the coveted of Coved West End Manager's Comedy of the Year Award (1979) for his play *Middle Age Spread*, argues for a much greater interchange across the Tasman.

There's a well-joke about a Quaker flight arriving in Wellington and the Captain saying, "We are now landing in New Zealand, please sit your watch back five years." Puntal as it is to admit it, it's largely true, applying as much to our cultural and artistic activities as to the more obvious material aspects of life (though we did get colour telly before you did, so there). It's only now that a film industry is properly under way (eleven productions forthcoming), grants to writers have substantially increased, dance companies are being formed, and so on. It's been much the same story in theatre.

Early in 1978 Dunedin's Horizon Theatre opened its new premises with a production of my play *Middle Age Spread*. In the interval two old ladies were heard talking. One was enquiring about the new building and its facilities and the other agreed with her and then said, "but what a pity they couldn't have chosen a nice English play to open with."

About five years ago, that attitude was typical of most NZ theatregers. But now the wind has been reversed, with some theatres claiming they have a better chance of getting full houses with New Zealand plays, and in the last twelve months or so seventeen new plays have been presented by our professional theatres.

How many of those seventeen will you hear of, let alone actually see? Previous lies, I imagine. The trouble is that both countries tend to look down on each other,



From my *Leaky (Delus) Run or Passion (Romance) or Fortune (Theatre's Ruin and Fate)*

not admitting that much of worth can come from either place. Your attitude is one of disdain, ours is of pity. I suspect Australia thinks that New Zealand should produce the equivalent in quantity and quality as Australia does (ie. country should match country), but if you squatted regarding us as the equivalent of one of your states, which we are in size and population, then perhaps our artistic output starts becoming significant, and you might take what we do a bit more seriously.

New Zealand similarly needs to change its attitude to Australian productions. The *Chorus* brothers came here with "Best Play" and "Best Actor" awards to their credit. "Pooh," said the GP here, "that's only Australia," and advance bookings were terrible. Word of mouth soon ensured that the play got the full houses it deserved, but my point is that, with these sort of prejudices, the box office should have been ruined the day bookings opened.

Having seen *The Club* in Sydney and laughed myself silly, I would willingly have put money into a NZ tour had anyone approached me to do so. Luckily no one did, because none of the productions of *The Club* had outstanding business. Australian, you see. The trouble is we hear little in advance about Australian plays, and you must bear your loss of sure. Both countries know more about what's on in the West End or on Broadway than on either side of the Tasman. And that's a pity.

What can be done to improve things? The most practical and costing next to nothing, would be for Theatre Australia to devote a couple of pages each quarter (say, to reviews of new New Zealand plays). After all, New Yorkers can read about them in *Forum*, where they're regularly reviewed, so why not you? And it's equally important that our *Age* magazine reviews new Australian plays.

It's true too, that we received Australian televised drama. Oh, we get *The Sullivans* and occasional blockbusters like *Ten in the Bed*, but no one-acts. People here think you don't do any. I gather the trouble is that TVNZ can offer only such low fees that it's not worth your while selling them to us. Well, that's a loss for us, perhaps it's something a cultural foundation could consider funding so that we can see something of your drama. As it is, the viewing public thinks Australia is all cowboy and westerns howling.

More exchanges please. Peter Carroll

NZ

accepted, I don't think we've had an Australian performing group here since the Peers Factory was a gift to the legend of King O'Malley in the early seventies. Of course touring groups around another country costs money, but it's only important for overseas that it's done so that both sides can compare standards and learn from each other. And it's absurd that we're still not able to see *The Education of Maximo Gonsales* or the Gordon Chace performance, or one of our own. And why? Because some bigger villi sitting on the rights, that's why, and what good that does anyone? I cannot fathom. (In fact, Australian theatres often sit on the Australian rights of overseas productions in the vague hopes of sending a production to NZ, but they never do and all that happens is that theatres here aren't able to do them. And it's a rare back in off.)

And we should be sending more productions to see. Last year the Elizabethan Trust kindly invited Downstage to send over their production of my *Prisoners of Mother England*. Downstage got a grant from the NZ-Australia Foundation and even over was all set to go, but the Trust finally couldn't settle on any dates so the whole thing fell through, to the worse disappointment of all at Downstage. A bad business, clearly, and not one to excite your readers on this side of the Tasman. But it's pleasing to note that you are beginning to get some of our work — you've had *Catholics Downed*, *The Case of Anthony Morehead* and Bruce Mason's *Mind of the Lamb*, which is all to the good.

And what of the seventeen plays I mentioned earlier? Two of them have swept the country. *For Skin* (Laurin) and *Mind of the Lamb* (and perhaps I could mention my own play, *Eight-Five*, which despite a collaboration from critics has had extended seasons at the three theatres in which it has been shown. Greg McGee's *For Skin* (Laurin) is a Tarrarua rugby club as background, and his play is used to examine the male Kiwi attitude to almost everything from sport to women. It's been described as the great leap forward in New Zealand drama. The Springbok tour has added a new dimension to the play, during the time that New Zealanders have put sport above politics. On the night of the day on which the Springbok match was stopped at Hamilton the critic reported that never had an audience been so attentive, never had the play meant so much to the actors. *For Skin* (Laurin) has a lot more to tell be-



McGee (*Mind of the Lamb*) and Graham Wright (*Eight-Five*) on stage. *Catholics Downed* is produced at the Yuna Theatre.

relevant for an Australian audience. It is McGee's first play, and now the theatre world here eagerly awaits his second.

*Mind of the Lamb* arose from a commission given to Bruce Mason by the Court Theatre of Christchurch. The conditions were stringent: to be suitable in a studio theatre, not to be set in a room, and the actors to be three women. Mason, stricken by cancer which had curtailed his performing, has, on his brilliant one-man show, rise to the challenge to produce a theatrical tour-de-force which with rare reviews, full houses everywhere, and even revivals in a standing ovation in Dunedin (and you have to live in Dunedin to appreciate how rare that is), New Mason is talking of performing again. If he does so, invite him over immediately — his *Mind of the Lamb* is a great piece of theatre.

To give details of the other plays would take more space than I'm allowed, but Playmarket, the main agency in New Zealand, would send scripts — their address is PO Box 9767 Wellington. They also publish a catalogue of more than forty New Zealand playwrights and the works available.

As many a friend who lettered, "We look forward to hearing from you shortly."

USA

## Promises

by Karl Levitt

Although you keep telling yourself that you should know better by now, each year in November the theatrical season always seems to hold as much promise. Experience has taught you that by now, July you will feel quite differently, but just now you can still believe that this might be the season when the Fabulous Invited gets out of bed and stands tall.

On Off-Broadway, two end-of-summer ventures have contributed to this dream of hope. Although one play is by a first time out dramatist and the other by a famous playwright, the two share a quality of qualified promise.

At this stage to apply the word "promise" to Tennessee Williams might seem inappropriate, but this was the word that kept coming to mind while watching his new play *Something Cloud, Something Clear* at the Jean Cocteau Repertory. Perhaps it was because of the play's defiance of convention, plus the fact that Mr Williams is back on firm autobiographical ground giving a portrait of the artist as a young man.

One thing about Tennessee Williams — the guy's got guts. Just last season he took unusually cruel punishment from the New York critics for his first Broadway venture in years, *Orpheus for a Summer Night*. He departed Broadway with better words, even mentioning Australia in his efforts to put as much distance as possible between himself and New York. Now here he is back with *Summer Heat* rewritten twice, plus a new two act play in *Something Cloud, Something Clear* someone asks the young playwright how long he will go on working. "Till I die from exhaustion," he replies. It looks like Mr Williams means it.

We are witnessing the phenomenon of the man everyone talks as "America's greatest living playwright" scurrying to find, in New York, a safe harbour. He seems to have found it at the Jean Cocteau Repertory, a company of about a dozen performers under the artistic direction of Eve Adamson. The group last season presented several, little seen Williams works. It is clear that in this Off-Off-Broadway company Tennessee Williams has located the climate of encouragement and dedication he was seeking. The *Something Cloud, Something Clear* opens the performing limitations of the group and

demonstrates that maybe reverence is not enough.

The play is a fictionalised memoir of the young playwright in a Provincetown beach shack in the summer of 1940. There on the dunes we see his first brush with the Broadway starlet and his one-sided romance with a doomed Canadian double-dogger. Both these autobiographical aspects are presented with sharpness and very humour. In the intervening 50 annual films includes a young woman who is the sister-love of the dead dogger and a gangster who is the despised keeper of the young woman (These dunes are very busy). As well, the young woman has not long to live. (Clapton is young playwright, only one Camille-type character per customer.)

This exclusive reminiscence is somewhat modified by the play being a memoir compiled with some games and a couple of other memory dialogues with unseen ghosts. One of these is Tallulah Bankhead and the content is intriguing if not particularly relevant. *Someday Clouds*, *Someday* Clapton has about it the charm of reminiscence and is more entertaining than this disclaimer might suggest. If the identification of the author were not known it would have been delightfully blended with that "disturb of all dirty words" — "prosemining".

Certainly this is only one of the words of praise that have been heaped on Kevin Wade for his first play *Act, F\*ckaway*. The play began at the WPA Theatre, one of Off-Off-Broadway's brightest groups, and has been transferred for a remunerative run at the Off-Broadway Orpheum Theatre. The setting is a timbered stylisation of a bicycle path in Central Park. We meet Michael who the previous day has married the girl he has been living with for several years. Phillip, a much-loved writer of detective stories and the lovely Lisa who shares an on-again-off-again affair with Phillip, in their short scenes taking place on consecutive workdays, we follow these two battles of the sexes. Michael's bride who returns off-stage is the fourth character in this discordant quartet.

For a fledgling playwright, Mr Wade deserves full marks for the theatrical originality of his concept and for the professional facility of his writing. He achieves some nimble expository scenes, and is capable of the fresh and stinging line that comes out of left field. The play as a whole, however, is dangerously dull and these three couples are riding on very thin material.

There is a significant irony in the fact that in New York comedy such as *Act, F\*ckaway*, where there is total freedom of language for the characters to say what's on their minds, the play ends up with having nothing remotely original to say. Phillip to Michael "You owe her don't you?" Michael to Phillip "It's very complicated." And that's about as deep as we get through the veneer of Mr Wade's brilliant professionalism. Brooklyn Adams as Lisa has bounce and charm and presents a new stage type: a natural sexbabe not afraid of four letter words. Kudos to Kevin Wade for promise but a few more awkward scenes and reconsiderations of the Tennessee Williams variety would be welcome.

Meanwhile looking ahead to the coming season on New York stages hope ours and the pulse quickens.

**MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC** Musicals will continue their Broadway takeover. The most recently anticipated is *North to the Sun* along Stephen Sondheim's latest effort based on a Kaufman and Hart play of the same name — Harold Prince will again direct. Michael Bennett has a new contender in his 4 *Chorus Line* model *Dream Girls* about the lives of backup singers. *The Jinx* a based on the life of baseball champion Jackie Robinson, the first black to play in major leagues. Another musical biography has Larry Kert as Al Jolson in *Jolson Tonight*. There'll be a salute to Harlem's Apollo Theatre in its heyday *The Apollo*. *It Was Just Last Night* A six hour musical riddle will be seen in the revised version of the play *Harlem* called *See How It Moves* with Donald O'Connor and Patricia Richardson. Off-Broadway there'll be Edward Gribbin's *Garden* — he was famous for 4 *Chorus Line* — at the Public. Carrie Kells will direct yet another biography, *Velvet*, with Ben Vereen as non-kisser who.

**STAR QUALITY** Katharine Hepburn, assisted by Dorothy Loudon, will play a rejected concert pianist in *The New York State* by Ernest Thompson (Hepburn has dabbled in the playwright it seems, and having starred in the film of his play *The Golden Family* Claudette Colbert with Jean Pierre Aumont, returns in a new thriller 4 *Tales For Magic*). At Circle in the Square, Joanne Woodward will be Claudette directed by Michael Cacoyannis. Later at the same theatre, which is clearly reaching for the stars, Nicol Williamson will try on *Marshall*. Other theatrical undertakings will see Michael York as

1981

# SHOWCAST

## CASTING DIRECTORY

Photographs and contacts for nearly 2000 Actors and Actresses

LIMITED EDITION

PRICE: \$38.00  
(including postage in Australia)

SHOWCAST OFFICES

Head Office: (02) 958 1088  
13 Macpherson St, Marrick 2038  
(near Crowsnest Junction)

Victoria: (03) 729 8262  
(24hrs 729 9914)

P.O. Box 285 Croydon 3136

OLD: (03) 32 5001 N.S.W. 513 8277  
W.A. 326 1646 TAS 252517  
N.T. 85 8522 N.Z. Wellington 894 321

Also publishers of  
*Australian Variety Directory*  
*Contents & Performances*  
*Performing Arts Year Book*

ENCORE MAGAZINE

# Sydney Acting School

Director: Gillian Owen

555 Military Road, Marrick 2038.  
P.O. Box 371, Spit Junction 2058.  
Telephone: 555 3855.

3 year Diploma Course  
Evening Classes

Fully comprehensive training for professional theatre including radio and television -

Entrance by Audition.

ENQUIRIES: 990 3680.  
Mon to Fri: 2 - 8pm.



Joanley Adams, Don Messer and Mark Adams in *Sex Exchange*. Photo: Carol Rosset

Harden at the Roundabout and William Hurt as Richard II at the Cottes Rep.

**BUNDLES FROM BRITAIN:** *Nude As A Nudie*, the current BSC production, will be the major import of the season. A bundle that indeed will cost a bundle — \$900 a ticket for the two four-hour performances. The *Stripper* will have Tom Courtenay in his original role, with Paul Rogers as the actor.

**OFF IS ONE:** Off-Broadway's Manhattan Theatre Club transfers two of its best to Broadway. Bill C. Davis' *Men Against* with Mike O'Shea and Bob Henders, Pulitzer Prize-winning *Coma: Or The Heart* from the Hudson Guild comes Sheldon Rosen's *Not Just Jack* concerning playwright Edward Sheldon and actor John Barrymore. Actress Colleen Dewhurst will direct.

**SCREEN TEST:** Hollywood gets Broadway as two leading directors come over. Robert Alton will direct a double bill by new playwright Frank South. *Two At A Time*. William Franklin is the director of the English import *Over For One* with Anne Bancroft and Max Von Sydow.

**FOR THE FIRST TIME:** Jules Fein has two openings on Broadway and a third. *For* for the Public. *Moggy And Purre* about the Tudor marriage, opens the Phoenix Theatre season. Roy Dotrice will be Pope Pius VII, kidnapped by Napoleon in Edward Strehlan's *Kingdoms*. And the most intriguing title so far is Tom Griffin's *Parsons* and *The Public* first.

All promises promises.

UK

## The complete strip show

by Irving Wardle

Just as a working-class beauty with sexual fantasies as boundlessly exotic as an Amazonian rain forest, and no means of satisfying them apart from a German lover who gives her more black eyes than orgasms. Old Mrs Meadows and her daughter Dawn live in a leaky council house and rarely go out except since Dawn was enticed into it by a policeman and turned peccolier. Meg and her friend Nancy are a pair of Grade-A girls going solo after the collapse of their two-on marriage.

You would not expect these ladies to have much to say to each other, but as it happens they have an interest in common. They love taking a Turkish bath. And in Neil Durr's play *Stripping (Comedy)* the wondering marital bath house emerges as that rare English institution, a non-exclusive club where women of every degree take refuge from the world of cancelled buses, boiling marmite, and dead-end jobs.

Life to show that the sight of a comely female company shodding their towels en route to the steam room adds a theatrical bonus even for spectators indifferent to lemons, class barriers, and the state of Britain's great hygiene. For male spectators there is also the lure of bathing what women talk about when they are alone.

These basic pleasures are clearly all part of Mrs Dawn's plan. From her generous viewpoint there is nothing incompatible between bringing the customers' eyes out on stairs and staging a demonstration of female solidarity. Woman to last is the complete strip show, in which the characters proceed from taking their clothes off to dismantling their marriages, their class prejudices, and their misused ideas of who they are.

It is a laid-out in four scenes, and first comes over as an inconsequential slice of life while we are getting to know the regulars and their routines. Given Mrs Durr's ear for authentic speech (she is the author of a minor classic called *Talking To Women*) the sight of Jane arriving with her latest debt-ridden complaints or Dawn nervously leaning on jelly babies in her cornered alcove is quite enough to be going on with. Then the dramatic gears unsuitably engage, and in time each of the girls has something to give the others.



The business of the play is to demonstrate the possibility of exchange between people whom society normally separates. The women work through class anger, personal vulgarity, and finally group action when the ladies barade themselves into the bath in defiance of a council demolition order.

By this time viewing has changed from a slice of life into an earthshaking fairy tale in which Dawn sheds her sexual role: the unburied Nancy is all set for sexual adventure and the unquelled Jane is about to get an education. It is too good to be true, but thanks to the work of Roger Smith's fine company, and above all to Georgina Hale's Jane — a marvellous blend of frailty and toughness with a vocal marmite to match Count Dracula's brass section — you want to believe it.

To the BSC's current audience, any reference to public baths is likely to induce a shudder in the wake of two productions on institutional atrocities, *Saltbush* and *The Last Day* and *The Basement* (Albion). It is a companion piece to *Don't Disturb* following the experience of a new inmate at a Stalene Corrective Labour Camp and showing isolated pockets of human decency somehow surviving inside a criminal system designed to destroy it.

It is a work of Tolstoyan indignation.





*Ma de Boud in *Ma Woud*, Mary Daniels, Georgina Hulse, Maria Church and the solo Boud in *Wouding**

ful) against first-hand testimony, and the BSC have treated it as a major event with monumentally scaled sets by Ralph Kohn fully evoking the dehumanising conditions of camp life. The same achievement also cannot be claimed for Clifford Williams' company, who excel in grotesque lustre and gleaming intrigues, but fail to convey the physical extremes of cold hunger and dark loss of identity. Add to that the historic central relationship between the infamous "innocent" hero and the Geling portrayed by boys and boys, and you have the makings of something less than a great occasion.

Unapologetically, the British playwright C.P. Taylor, who knows only too keenly how more to stir about the totalitarian experience than the victimised Solzhenitsyn Taylor's play, *Trial* (Warehouse stumbled into the stars of an anxious young liberal attack me, who find happiness and fulfilment in the 85. We watch him by imperceptible degrees, shedding his Jewish host (trial) complementing book-burning and anti-Semitism, purges, and ending up as Lyubimov's representative as *Andrei*. At one stage, he finds a plausible defence for what he is doing, and Taylor's great achievement is to prevent the actor from (in point of view, while simultaneously) putting the scene in morally critical

perspective. He does this partly through a masterful handling of stage time recombining perhaps strands of retrospective, and immediate events) and partly through his device of an on-stage, late quartet, where selections from the *Nachos* Primer and the Richard Tarlier repertory are carelessly playing away inside the hero's head until he arrives at *Andrei*, where, at last, he finds there is a real hand. Alan Howard's performance as the intellectual master leaves one feeling you might have believed in exactly the same war yourself.

Australians who remember the name of Barry Humphries may be interested to learn that his larval location, Dame Edna Everage, has just watched new heights by taking over the Albert Hall in a self-appointed gale called *Fare People of the Prime*, backed with the full resources of the London Symphony Orchestra and the Australian Sings and performing two large works by Carl Davis — *Prime and the Mind* (One last December, evening *Prime* hammered down the British to levels (Efficient Boud?) and a careful bang of Australia. The whole thing went off as a preposterously over-the-top joke that prevents Dame Edna from doing what she does best — insulting a hand-picked selection of spectators. But the glibly waving fare seemed to have it

## AUSTRALIAN CENTRE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

152 Darling Street, Potts Point, NSW.

204 Tel 257 1200

Director: Mark Thorne

Secretary: Alison Lynn

## WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS ONSTAGE

Earlier this year The Dramatists Guild Committee for Women held a meeting in New York on "Women Playwrights Onstage: Their lives reflected in their work". Special attention was drawn to an important book, *Women in American Theatre*, compiled by Helen Knott Chase and Linda Walsh Jenkins (Crown Publishing, 1 Park Avenue, New York NY 60116). Good reading!

## PLAYSCRIPTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Recently we have received the following titles of new international plays disseminated by the Hungarian ITI Centre. Copies are available for study at the ITI office, the Sydney Opera House Performing Arts Library and the State Theatre Company of South Australia. *Henry from Finland* — *Amor and Kibbala*, by Jussi Kytäläinen, (from Philip Haskins) from Egypt — *Car of Seven Doors* by Rashed El Dawar, (from Nancy Waters) from Czechoslovakia — *Awake in the Sand*, by Zdenek Kaloc (from John Newman), and from Australia, Roger Patterson, *World Gentleman* in Simon Allen.

## DANCE IN THE NETHERLANDS 1978-81

An extensive report published by the Dutch ITI Centre. Available from: Netherlands Theatre Institute, Herengracht 166-168, 1016 BP Amsterdam, Netherlands.

## CANADA'S PLAYWRIGHTS

This biographical guide documents 14 authors. Available from the publishers: Canadian Theatre Review Publications, York University, 4300 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario M3J 1P6.

## THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

With the support of the National Endowment for the Arts (USA), has published *Graphic communications for the performing arts*, an interdisciplinary compendium of outstanding promotional graphics from the worlds of non-profit theatre, music and dance. Available: TCG Publications Department, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

## Tribute to a masterpiece

### ACCIDENTAL DEATH OLD TIMES

by Janet Healey

*Accidental Death of an Innocent* by Henrik Ibsen. Directed by George Whaley. Produced by Michael Roddy. 11 Nov 1981. 100 Melb Theatre, 1001 Victoria Road, Melbourne.

Director: Geoff McAlister. Designer: David Dawson. Cost: 1981-82. George Whaley. Producer: Ben McMillan. Director: John Pablos. Designer: Michael Roddy. 11 Nov 1981. 100 Melb Theatre, 1001 Victoria Road, Melbourne.

*Old Times* by Harold Pinter. Director: David Dawson. 11 Nov 1981. 100 Melb Theatre, 1001 Victoria Road. Designer: George Whaley. Designer: David Dawson. Cost: 1981-82. George Whaley. Producer: Ben McMillan. Director: John Pablos. Designer: Michael Roddy. 11 Nov 1981. 100 Melb Theatre, 1001 Victoria Road, Melbourne.

Several months ago I wrote of the high hopes engendered by the emergence of a new professional company, Fortune Theatre, under the artistic direction of George Whaley. By September 12 the excitement was at fever pitch: it was the opening night of *Accidental Death of an Innocent*. In Doris Day, Fortune's first production under the new dispensation, Harold Pinter took three weeks later gave Whaley's first production for the company, Pinter's *Old Times*, which opened at the Playhouse, on October 1.

Fort's first was essentially the best production by Geoff McAlister, with Whaley in the central role of the first man. It was a superior, strikingly high professional production which made good use of the flexible space at the ANU Arts Centre. I heard it, but in the audience, I missed some disorientation. People were confused by the hint of common life and a common complaint was that the play is not relevant (there were not enough for them, the notion of jokes with a purely local relevance, far from overcoming the lack of relevance, tended to emphasise it).

I spent three minutes because I have to say that the main response was quite different. Beneath the comedy and the living satire I found a metaphor which gave the play a broader and more complex substance than that of entertainment and political comment. "Goed a human?" emerged for me as the most interesting question raised by the play. And it is not



Harold Pinter. *When we Dream* (Old Times). Photo: Peter Brown.

the easiest of tasks to ask that question, if not to answer it.

Whaley's was a sensitive performance as probably inherent in the play that the other roles do not make such an impact. Ben McMillan/Bernard, Michael Roddy (the Superintendent) and Bill McClellan (the Constable) raised their characters with personality through idiosyncratic mannerisms and skilful costume. John Pablos (Howard) was not well cast, except in physical type, and Lorraine Rowe/Maria Holmström, despite an amazing blend of machine and super-feminine, together in her accessories, did not come to grips with the task, and even, surprisingly, furnished a few lines.

In *Old Times*, as in all Pinter's plays, the verbal structure is dense, punctuated by lamely (or suggestively) what, and the location is a room situated somewhere in time or space. But this play uses no symbols, props except the room itself. With the setting thus pared to the bone, the interlocking emotional alignments of the drama are conveyed by gesture, by subtle changes of intonation in a frozen, halting, the curtains and evoking the world outside the play. The subject is the whole text.

In middle-age Doris, beside Kate and their longed Anna (all their associations twenty years earlier. Memory reconstructs the past and erases the present. A three-way sexual alliance is hinted at but never made explicit, as the spiritual message is not. In some dramatic, magic, that I can't analyse, time-and-now reality is self-present in the best of kind of the play, comes briefly, shockingly, into prominence at the end as Doris sits in Kate's lap and reaches again in the final tableau that reveals the sexual triangle into which they three are locked.

Marie Rodby gave a moving portrait of Doris, a man trapped between two women and needing both the assurance of middle-age, his natural habitat. Lorraine Rowe splendidly performed several adult roles par performances, with a convincing sense and sense, performance as Anna.

Margaret de Moya's Kate was simply the best thing I have seen in the English language, with drama, insight, beautiful, she was magnificence in every way and at every phase of her subtle, composed. I recall particularly her almost fatal stroke under the post-operative gaze of Doris and Anna (the language of face and body was unconsciously more eloquent than speech).

John Dawson's design and Lorraine Rowe's costume perfectly complemented George Whaley's sensitive production, which was genuinely alive with economic for the text. This play lived with us for days and goes in stature as it lived my memory, with a sense to a masterpiece and in Whaley's production. The play and its performance was like a stone thrown into a pond, the ripples widened to infinity.

Fortune Theatre again earned her stars as what it can do. It is good that the fortunes of politics and culture in our country do not depend on all our first and professional company.

## Fantastic family dramas

### LAST DAY IN WOOLLOOMOOLOO BLOOD OF THE LAMB

by Edward Howard

*Last Day in Woolloomooloo* film by Ben Blair. Normal Sydney 85th. Opened October 7, 1987

Director: John Bell. Designer: Tony Tripp. Lighting: Jonathan Gibbs. Stage Manager: Anne Marie Morgan. Cost: Pat Loner. Script: none. Leader: Guyman. Donald Fells, Peter Collingwood. Artist: Alexander Stuart. Length: 110 mins.

*Blood of the Lamb* film by Bruce Mason. Court Theatre of Australia's 8th. Philip Street Theatre Sydney 1987. Opened October 6, 1981

Director: Peter Heeger. Designer: Stage Manager: Simon Wilson. Lighting and Sound: Don Harris. Cost: Elizabeth Moody, Jack Douglas. Technical: Edgermont. (All in name)

Ben Blair's *Last Day in Woolloomooloo* at the Normal fills a gorgeous set by Tony Tripp of a big old Sydney flat bombed away at the corners with an accidental family of amiable failure, all down and out men, except for the "manageress", Dorree.

Dorree, generously played by Pat Evison, is like a round magpie, the mother around whom the men — aging homosexual, the shell-shocked, a failed union official and others — revolve. In time Dorree and her brood revolve around the old Kalbarrier fall of boys.

The boys are bad children. Dorree extracts the rent from them, but mothers them, lends them money, advises them and steps between them when they square off to fight each other.

The bad daddy is Dave, the rusted landlord. He is a real man with the boys. Dorree gives him absolute allegiance. She agrees to keep her secret (his house, which is the only place they exist, is to be auctioned. He expects to make \$120,000 profit).

Dave, played by Robert Alexander, is an ideal stereotype: smart and not poor. China, Ralph Cotenil, a somewhat English than Australian-Irish but makes the change from slanger to revolutionary. He is a union official who was dismissed for tackling the toll. He stages the revolution against Dave the Father, and cleans the stage of props to barricade his car.

He drinks up love, an alcoholic old Amos, gets him to put on his slouch hat and yell Japs! so that he becomes the Dave



Lee Dayman and Ralph Cotenil in Ben Blair's *Last Day in Woolloomooloo*

Dorree, who at first defends Dave, comes over to China's side, and helps to put the body of poor Eric, who has collapsed, into the fridge.

It is an oddball triumph for China, and he and Dorree exchange tender glances, and plans.

Peter Collingwood plays Ted, a mysterious, well-groomed man, interested in dreams. He brings Dorree's cat, Cinders, back from hilarious nightmares. And at the end he brings Eric back out of the fridge, and revives him by magic. After talking for a hour, Eric tells of conversations with phantasms, and how the dead did not envy us our alive state.

It is a paradox that the character who is most out of it, who is drunk on the floor at the passing of the curtain and who is vague even about his vagueness throughout — that Leslie Dayman makes him the most human, the only one who does stand for anyone else but himself (even he is able to sound). So the deadness of these living dead emerges as the greatest.

The perspective of magic, or of the artist, that we are all sleepwalkers, that we must awake, seems to vanish, as Ted awakes around in his red robes pulling cards from the air.

An excellent and relaxed production from director John Bell with good performances by all, especially Pat Evison and Leslie Dayman.

New Zealand playwright Bruce Mason, having used Marilyn French's *The Women's Room* wrote *Blood of the Lamb* for three actresses and no actors. It is a male

historist's play about women, and the Court Theatre of Christchurch's production at Sydney's Philip Street Theatre was one long awkward moment. On one interminable weekend it wrote like Shaw but lacks wit.

Tonianna Holgerston, the prodigal Victoria, returns to tell her father Henry (Elizabeth Moody) and her mother that she is getting married. She discovers that her father gave birth to her and walked her and that her mother is really her mother's lesbian lover. Children sense these things.

Victoria comes round, from the verge of suicide to a solitary solidarity with these gay daughters against their, who only believe in Screw Kill, Eric.

The production is a tragedy, so filled with potted puns, long-winded deliveries and reified Italian so-cuz and pro-mas and lacking wit.

When Henry Higginson and Eliza Higginson tell Victoria how Henry had been vigorously raped by her betrothed, the planner, Kirkwood, who was Victoria's true father, and who had killed a lamb and poured the blood over his head and groin before raising her vaginity — we didn't want to get involved. But I must admit I fought goosebumps when Victoria was able to embrace Henry.

Eliza Hooper's daughter is fleeing, the three swag chains and won't in the pitter drop. Their accents were confusing.

When the light strikes her at a certain angle, Elizabeth Moody as Henry in baggy white suit, ascot, short back and sides and bushy nose is almost Les Patterson.









period of departure of the cast as they run across the clearing and out of view, that is a production totally at home in its setting.

If it has something of the nineteenth century spectacular about it, it is nevertheless a production that does not shun its central performances. Admittedly one or two peripheral actors are uncomfortable with the distance they have to project an already hesitant comedian of the language, and a lacklustre rendering of the mock pastoral courtship of Silenus and Phoebe creates a less-than-buoyant mood in the otherwise buoyant rhythms. There is also perhaps a lack of focus in the depiction of the aristocratic Touchstone and Jaques, but generally the core of the cast came across with nuanced clarity. Van Mackintosh gives a slightly fussy Orlando and his ambivalent courtship of the doubly comical/loving Ganymede is an intelligent investigation of the young aristocrat's equivocal nature. Carol Burns' Rosalind is superlative, uncompromisingly successful yet complex in motive and spirit, confirming her as one of Shakespeare's most generously appealing heroines.

Waratah itself comes away with something of a black mark however. A few years ago this spring festival, with its bonfire image of "fun in the sun", absorbed the Queensland Festival of the Arts, and only this month has taken over the remaining of next year's Commonwealth Games cultural festival. One hopes that for more than in the planning of the programme than was displayed on the first night of *As You Like It*, which for twenty minutes had to contend with the rampant aggression of a nearby firework display. John Tasker may have turned the wind which, in the only technical aberration of the evening, capriciously blew a smoke effect out over the audience, but he has to be thanked that Orlando did not have to declare his love for Rosalind to the strains of the Pipa Police Band playing a quartet of a mile away.

## Ideals bearing fruit

### FOREPLAY & AFTERGLOW

by Joanna Dewar

*Company and Afterplay: Blount Brown Theatre Company, John Carroll Theatre, Devonport, Tas. Opening September 19 1981*

*The House: by Sandy McCutcheon. Directors: Bruce McArthur, John, Sally, Margaret, Michael Moore*



Colin Bell, Doreen Morgan, Sandy McCutcheon in *Blount Brown's House As House Temperature*

*Co-Ed: Peter Bennett. Director: Sandy. Actors: Michael Moore, Kaitie Pughall. House As House Temperature: by Susan Bell and Doreen Morgan. Michael Moore. Co-Ed: Sandy McCutcheon. Colin Bell, Doreen Morgan, Pughall, and Bennett. by Sandy McCutcheon. Doreen Morgan, Michael Moore, Peter Bennett. Co-Ed: Michael Moore, Peter Pughall. (Theatrical)*

Theatrical and theatrical words were about a decade ago by the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board and the Tasmanian Arts Council and beginning to germinate in public awareness of live theatre and bear fruit in the form of several new companies, a few of which are prepared to tour the State even to country areas. Foremost of these is the Blount Brown Theatre Company, is now even based in the capital but has its home at the John Carroll Theatre, Devonport.

From the initial shock rendered on local conversations, theatre gains its first production of *As You Like It* does have, through several years and many plays, worked and finally won worldwide the vagrant theatre — mainly for alternative theatre.

Blount's latest production, *Company and Afterplay*, now playing at the John Carroll Theatre and shortly to tour the State, consists of three loosely-connected plays, presented "in the round" varying in structure, form and theme: *The House* — by Sandy McCutcheon, *House As House Temperature* by Susan Trotter, a Melbourne playwright, and *Company and Afterplay* also by Sandy, from which the whole production takes its title.

*The House* — a historical, rather than realistic, directed and imaginatively

choreographed by Arwen McCutcheon, influenced by the original scene played by composer Dale Moughar — explores the idea of an ordinary Australian male captured by a totally female alien race on the verge of extinction, solely for the purpose of the reproduction of their race through romance. A comedy in the plot, which almost "makes" the role of actor/director a one in which even Lord Olivier has not always achieved success.

*House As House Temperature* is a first encounter for local audiences with Theatre of the Absurd. Planners with weak stomachs or heads into the Freedom From Hunger Campaign may find it a bit difficult to take for Wright Wanchers it will prove a "just do it", but it may just win back and let it all splash over one — the performance of Sandy McCutcheon. Colin Bell and Doreen Morgan are actors and skillfully directed under the direction of Michael Moore.

Finally, *Company and Afterplay* is a serious prose/poetry word play, beautifully acted by Helen Hough and Michael Moore, which held the audience spellbound — slight adjustments to the script should produce a finer performance. McCutcheon's plays are now developing a wider role and structure, finding techniques acquired from Barbara Williams are evident and the involvement of many artists. Michael Moore with the production is also noticeable particularly in Doreen Morgan's work, and the ideas on which the Company was formed are beginning to bear fruit.





## Unravelling Shakespeare

### MACBETH KING LEAR

by Neel Purdon

*Written by Shakespeare. As told by Stage Australia. Adelaide, SA. Opened September 1991.*  
*Director: Ben Hill. Designer: Luke Corbett. Lighting: Graham Matthews. Stage Manager: Geoff Bellamy.*  
*Cast: David Ingram, Barbara Roberts, Nick Gill, Peter Higgins, Mark Wharmby, Helen Pearson, Ian Baker, John Ryles, David Roberts, Peter Selous, Chris Rogers.*  
*(Photo courtesy)*

*King Lear by Shakespeare. Stage Company. Adelaide, SA. Opened September 1991.*  
*Director: Brian Debuson. Design: Brian Debuson. Music: Mikalson. Cost: van Nolle.*  
*Cast: Brian Bell, Deborah Lurie, Barbara Roberts, Helen Pearson, Nick R. Crockett, Robert Wilson, John Noble, David Hamilton, Peter Crowder, John McEwen, Alan Farrow, John French, Bruce Mikalson.*  
*(Photo courtesy)*

In an well-orchestrated publicity for *Macbeth*, the Acting Company has been using terms such as "tagged", "vigorous" and "Gang" to define its style. As a company which has built its reputation on hard, solid work in schools, on "no-fuss style of production", its aim has been overwhelmingly to provide a clear text with immediate application. In this light, *Macbeth* must be regarded as nothing less than a disaster for both company and audience.

Having chosen a play which of the entire Shakespeare canon, is the one that traditionally gives actors, directors, designers and has school children rolling Jaffas down the aisles, the Company has proceeded to colour it in with a sea of visual and vocal concepts that would leave even Peter O'Toole with a moist ear. The set, a pump-pot combination of soft, conservative, artistic yellow and red stripes in the last R-Mann style is so loud that the actors apparently feel obliged to address their lines to it in the vain hope that it will stop screaming. The music is, moreover, although handled over several levels so that when a character has a particularly boring old soliloquy to deliver, he or she can loop-up and down as far as to the Ministry of Silly Walks.

The costumes too, aimed the sight, onto the face and make the seated hero look at the ribs. Scotland is revealed as a wild country which evidently spends its energies in the celebration of in-the-pains

and egg-boots. Add splashes of blue feathers and flowers, and you get some idea of the atmosphere of Fiesco and live music. At least the chances a mob of mounted sword clowns who stretch and ply from one lord to the other are hampered less than Macbeth and his Lady, who are required to do some of the night scenes looking like Papageno and Papagena after an outbreak of pantois fever. If the designer must be censured for the creation of a wildly inappropriate and individual set, the director ought to have noticed what was happening to his space and his actors.

In a potentially exciting traverse space, the actors are used without notions of scale, locality, or evenality. Alone of the few points where a real standing prop is required, as the banquet table, it has to be thrown off. The blocking is not calculated for the effective focus of speech and gesture at the audience. And, though the pace of the scenes is swift and fluid, their intelligibility is hampered by being directed at the side flate. It is virtually impossible then to become involved in the characters. In fact, there is no consistent creation of character. Nick Gill, as his "homophone and someone" shocks suddenly by the reality and depth of his delivery, just as Sue Roder down on the slopwalking scene, where the careful set-up of the previous murder of Duncan pays off by extending the audience of the origin of each of her gestures. But generally there is not so much going on in this production as the creating of lines on top of colour-coded flate.

The Stage Company's *King Lear* is an act of heroic nerve and devotion. Virtually the whole text is given and it is treated in a scholarly and intelligent way without ever becoming pedantic.

The worst establishes itself with great confidence and command. A ritual circling and then the players take up their positions. The Space is played to on all its sides and levels. A few things go. What's all that has doing lying under the staircase? Must be rural. If it's rural, who are the stars and seats made of that particularly cultural material used? Costume's wrong. Costumes are funny too. What are they all doing in khaki and pumas and home-guns?

No. Costumes look good and feel as the actors group up, disappear to the four corners and leave the scene. Accents are funny. France and Burgundy especially, can't manage the same sound as if they're about to beat Cordelia off to the Swiss CAE. And the Fool speaks Laugh-In American.

Slowly, a social impression begins to form, an imaginary landscape is created. Where are we, with these wounded soldiers, these actually may men and cool clipped ladies, if not in Australia? An authentic vision starts to illuminate the stage. Mad explorers, clearly kids, but football players (the line has never worked so well!) begin to materialise out of the mist. Time after time, line after line into gold and rings true. Richard Ragan and General, wonder who's this any Shakespeare created in *Macbeth*, the full spirit of the Australian bourgeoisie starts to rain as sheepfold land. Cornwall has obviously lunched at Government House and the contrast with the mob of poor hither and, wandering around the Space in their army blankets, couldn't be more effective.

And then, with the first great lines of the storm scene, the whole thing begins to unravel like an almost knotted wire. Someone is going berserk on the gang. The red gals on the lamps are doing overtime. Lear and the Fool reach an sympathetic, penultimate. What can be heard of their lines through the racket gives the impression not so much that they have been caught in a tempest as that they have wandered into a disco.

Debbie Little has a hard time of it watching Lear like a real-world little frog, and Wayne Bell, despite a few gland waves, never seems more than pleasantly done. What should be an astounding and frightening moment of private madness, into a public theatre becomes dangerously close to Dad and Dave.

The social criticism, the pity, the grotesque are lost in a welter of laugh lines. The audience feels secure again, in product, the point where it should feel most discomforted. Brian Debuson quotes Kavanagh throughout his programme notes, and it is obvious that he has been influenced by the latter's book, *The Space of Tragedy*. If he has also, as I think it seems Kavanagh's critique him with Yarn Yarn as Lear, he must have been deeply moved by the combination of the personal and the political in the suffering body of the journey "Lear".

The fact that the Stage Company doesn't achieve anything like this is a reflection of many things, one of which is the nature of actor training, and the idea of the relation between "actor" and "real person" in our own society. At least the Stage Company has attempted to push a little further the boundaries of speaking what we feel not what we ought to say.

## Convincing and unconvincing style

### THE TRUCE THE LONDON CUCKOLDS

by Garrie Hutchinson

*The London Cuckolds* by Edward Ravenscroft  
Melbourne Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre  
Via, Opened August 26, 1981.  
Director: Simon Chilvers, Designer: Allan Lane,  
Lighting: Anne Lewis.  
Cost: David Reynolds and Graham Cassell, Douglas  
Hodge, Mary Holman, Sally Cuthill, Nick Goddard,  
Edwin Hodgeman, Michael Fagan, Ann Scott,  
Pamellory, Bob McMillan, Tim Mayler, Sally  
McMillan, Irena Janowicz, Douglas Hodge, Peter  
Cuthill.  
(Production note)

*The Truce* by Sandy McArthur, Melbourne Theatre  
Company, Russell Street Theatre, Via, Opened  
September 1, 1981.  
Director: Alan Lane, Designer: John Corwen,  
Lighting: Anne Lewis,  
Cost: Catherine Hamlin, Ross McLean, Kenneth  
Sawle.  
(Production note)

Two things deserve mention about the first production of Edward Ravenscroft's *The London Cuckolds*. One is that it was first produced in 1681, 20 years after the Restoration, and thus only 26 years after the introduction of actresses to the London stage.

It was pretty clearly Ravenscroft's intention to scribble together the relatively new freedom of actresses to ogle and admire beautiful bodies and flowing assets with every trick in the former's book: disguises, deceptions, substitutions, chamber pots, dopey politicians, rakes and humples, and make it about as comic (as popular, pompous version of the population — for the gaudy and entertainment of all and sundry).

That he succeeded is evidenced in Cuckold's adoption as a regular folk event until cut off by prudish like David Garrick and George II.

In performance nowadays, of course, both the sense of rudeness of sticking your tongue out at the Lord Mayor (if we had one in Melbourne) and the appreciation of

barbity and unbuttoned actresses has diminished.

Set in the theatre has come a long way down the road since Ravenscroft's day. *Newspapers* in New York theatres like *Billie de Jour* and *The Project* offer the real thing. On the other hand there's no place, least of all in the theatre (save the immortal Barry Humphries) where contemporary equivalents of the London Cuckolds, our politicians, councillors, mayors and city administrators, get their official pen in the face.

Not that anyone could argue that a company such as the MTC could or should do anything like that. They rather all are to some extent indebted to the Melbourne City Council that in a farce like *The London Cuckolds* creates opportunities for localising modernising do occur. It isn't, after all, a great work of your typical theatrical Art. It's a farce, an entertainment, something to make you laugh in public, an opportunity for bawdy performances from the actors.

And aside from missing the chance to drop in all this, to mock dignitaries, to write little bits here and there, Simon Chilvers' production does the play indifferent justice. It's seemingly already chopped some of the more boring scenes, and got the thing down to a more modern 2½ hours or so, our appetites for getting our money's worth having declined since Ravenscroft's time.

There is perhaps a slight lack of pace, mainly because of the time taken to change *Alan Lane's* ingenious and atmospheric, but time-consuming acting. For the actors have a terrific time, and that commensurate with it. They start playing a kind of the actual *Number 10* with a cloak of respectability (long across it by virtue of its age).

I especially appreciated the stylish restraint of Edwin Hodgeman as the mightily frustrated Mr. Randle and the ludicrous charms of Mary Robshaw as *Arabella* and Bob McMillan as *Eugenius*.

In Sandy McArthur's play *The Truce* we have old fashioned style of a different sort. Not the life and wit of the Restoration, but the dried head of the well-made play. Nor that *The Truce* has the seamless characterisation and narrative of the best of the well-made genre, but it has aspirations. Here we have what is called "main human understanding" that is the idea that optimism, hope and individual

acts of generous humanity, selfless risk flourish in the worst conditions.

And that there are happy endings.

*The Truce* puts a young Jewish woman in a collar with an aristocratic Catholic woman in the aftermath of the Warsaw Uprising, October 1944. The Nazis are doing a house to house, burning and blowing up what remains of the city. Will they come to terms with each other and survive, or fight each other and die? The women are stitched as representatives of the worst attitudes of their class to make their ultimate coming together all the more poignant.

We watch them suspicious and wary at first then working together, celebrating when they find a fortuitously hidden trunk of food, silver plate and clothes, afraid when a Nazi finds the cellar; then triumphant when the Nazis are to be an ordinary human being who doesn't want to kill them and instead arranges for their escape from Warsaw.

All of this really does require writing of a high order if we are to empathise with the situation of the women — raped or debilitated, as they say. Unhappily it doesn't really get it. Two times the play lurches from clumsily giving us real, historical information to moving sentiment drizzle, with Warsaw street names dropped in and set speeches about motives and intentions.

I found that the writing wasn't convincing enough to allow these two characters to live as exceptions in Warsaw at that terrible year. Even the programme, but the horrific detail of what really happened and what it's true that 40% or so of the population managed to survive, a hard one to think it was more difficult than spending a couple of nights in a cellar to be led to safety by a boy soldier, the good Nazi, given if funny things happen in war, it's hard to believe.

And if you don't believe, you don't enjoy.

Gabrielle Hamlin and Ross McLean play the women with all sympathy as they have to do, and designer John Corwen uses a lot of tricks.

Which reminded me of the agonising scene in Martin Sherman's *Blue* in the same theatre last year, shifting rocks from one place to another for no reason at all save the characters were in a concentration camp. There was no truth there, but there was still humanity.



THE MIMICRY AND THEATRICALITY OF THE BLUES: *Bedbug Celebration*

## Reflecting the eighties

### HUNGER BEDBUG CELEBRATION XENOPHOBIA by Suzanne Spinner

*Bedbug Celebration* by John Hux, 1989 (1990) (in Print) (written: "No Drama" Inc. Opened Sept 4 1989)  
Directed: Richard Shepherd, Douglas, Steve Morris, Steve, and Sarah, Bill Newman, Olga Morrison, Brian Manning

It was "Prologue" to a play by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris. It was the first of three plays by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris. It was the first of three plays by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris. It was the first of three plays by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris.

*A Hunger* Adapted by Wayne Marmorek, adapted from John William Zappa's "Hunger" (written: "No Drama" Inc. Opened Sept 19 1989)  
Directed: Martin Goodman, Douglas, Steve Morris, Sarah Hux

*Xenophobia* by Phil Newman, John McMillan, and Steve Morris, written by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris. It was the first of three plays by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris.

Directed: John McMillan, Steve Morris, and John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris. It was the first of three plays by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris.

Lee Hux, "No Drama" Inc. Opened Sept 4 1989  
Directed: Richard Shepherd, Douglas, Steve Morris, Steve, and Sarah, Bill Newman, Olga Morrison, Brian Manning

*Bedbug Celebration*, *Hunger*, *A Hunger*, and *Xenophobia* are all new Australian plays and introduced theatre that indicate a direction in the origins that is international and multifaceted compared to the earlier celebrations of nationalism that characterised the seventies.

However, the strategy for these three productions could not be more different. *Bedbug Celebration* is John Hux's reworking of Marmorek's 1979 play. *A Hunger*, *A Hunger* was adapted by Wayne Marmorek from John Hux's 1974 short story. *A Hunger* was written by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris. It was the first of three plays by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris. It was the first of three plays by John William Zappa, written by Bill Newman, John Hux, and Steve Morris.

Richard Shepherd's production of *Bedbug Celebration* was an ambitious and exciting, multi-media event with such a plethora of visual and aural imagery that it felt at times like an extended television clip. In the out-of-the-ordinary of the From Theatre and using a proscenium arch stage separated into two defined areas by a giant screen, it suggested a vast space-projection and placed the audience at a remove as if in their own living room. The intricate lounge food delineation of the stage resolved the problem of separating the three distinct time zones of the play and aligned the audience with the lounge characters of the year 2029. We saw the events of 1929 and 1979 as they did through the medium of the screen but at the same time we were alienated from all three scenes of society, particularly as the one related to our present was filtered by the imagination of the futuristic, robotic, World Lunch.

In this way, the production created the illusion of continuity that television and film create and reinforced our detachment from the action. The three epochs were presented to us as if under a giant microscope and we were able to examine them in a laboratory of human social behaviour with the objectivity of a scientist.

The Protagonist of this societal judgement was the character of Prosperin Strickland, a modern space-hog who is, in a way, a man of his time (1929) who is unable through the mistakes of science managed to be perpetually resurrected and thus became a man for all times. While you are hardly expected to identify with him, much less feel sympathy, he does serve as a sort of white landmark by which one measures the social advances of each epoch.

What ultimately becomes interesting is his propensity for rumination and his ability to survive such shock of the new. In each of the three manifestations, his naïve, apprehension is exploited in two characters who represent disadvantaged science in the one hand and intellectual independence on the other and it is this reciprocal relationship which Ray demonstrates most clearly.

Throughout the play the actors worked as a tight ensemble, in some three distinct verbal and physical languages and a multiplicity of roles, but among them William Zappa as Strickland, Prosperin Hux, William as the commercial political entrepreneur, Bill Goodman as the man of science, and Wayne Marmorek as the man.



gate daughter of the future, stand out. But had it not been for the design, music, and general pantheism of Dave Majors and Rod Symons and the conceptual fireworks of Richard Marple, this play would have remained merely an interesting treatise.

*A Woman of Strife* was first produced last year at La Mama, but this production at Arthall has seen a considerable refinement of direction by Martin Chuzzleworth and even tighter performance by its writer-adaptor, Wayne Muncandy. Already a play rich in metaphor and resonance, *A Woman of Strife* by the deft and sensitive actors in Northern Ireland over the last year has now acquired an additional layer of political relevance.

The premise of the piece is the spectacle of man who lives for a living belief, a public good, for the sensation of suffering. He personifies himself as an artist of hunger and his performance functions as an unambiguous message for the role of the artist in society. His act is profoundly theatrical and in this version the performance is taken into a realm of ritual, tragedy, and even occasionally Dostoev in *The Idiot*. The music (in various styles) has charged and informed the politics of the writing, unreasonably. The combination of Christmas, design, director and Muncandy's crystalline writing and trench-fused performance has provided an intense and compact piece in a merely fifty minutes. Both the play and the performer deserve a wider audience.

*Amphitruon* is a piece more searching in its intention than the previous. It revealed the possibilities of a subject hitherto unexplored in Australian theatre, at the same time as it showed the limitations of the form in which it was told. It explored the processes of misanthropism against the harsh realities of high cost living in the inner suburbs, in the form of a rock musical and in so doing fulfilled the primary function of contemporary theatre, by equating new concerns with new subject matter.

However its lacking lay in its paucity of theatrical invention and the ultimate thinness and blandness of its approach which though it may have satisfied its audience, and school the liberal consensus, that the subject was being dealt with at last, it obviously could both spare. My concern is that both are too important and too hungry to be satisfied this easily.

Anthony Hopkins as John Proctor  
Crucible at Malthouse, Melbourne  
Photo: Arthall Productions

## Scripts as the bottom line

### SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL SISTERLY FEELINGS STATE OF SIEGE

by CHIT Gilman

*Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* by Ray Lawler (Melbourne, WA, Perth WA, Opened September 18 1981)  
Director: Edgar Morelli, Designer: William Howard, Stage Manager: Helen Gaskin  
Cast: Barbara Lake, Peter Phair, Frank Chelton, Olive Hilder, Tappi Leo, Nina Funnell, Barry, Monica Ogden, Ron, Phil McRobison, Johnson, Jack, King (Perth added)

*Sisterly Feelings*, Also a dark house, National Theatre, Company: Playhouse, Perth WA, Opened September 22 1981  
Director: Edgar Morelli, Designer: Hans Niesig, Lighting: Duncan Orr, Stage Manager: George Edwards, Richard Harkin  
Cast: Rosemary Dwyer, Anna Brown, Margaret Ford, Denise Kurl, Bruce Dwyer, Paul English, Liz Stone, Janet Ross, Glenn Smith, Caroline McRobison, Gerald Harlock, An Cartwright (Perth added)

*State of Siege* by Albert Camus, WA Theatre Company, WAIT, Perth, Opened September 24th  
Director: Phil Thomson  
With John Thomson, Lisa Howard, Mark MacIntyre (Perth only)

Ray Lawler's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* has for a good many years now had undisputed status as a classical Australian drama. Accordingly, each production of the piece must be undertaken with this fact in mind. The realistic style of the play, and the likelihood that a good proportion of the audience will have seen it before and will expect to see again something known and loved, means that a director of the play has severe limitations of general interpretation placed upon him, while at the same time he must give meticulous attention to the rhythms, timing and nuance of each performance in order that his production might be favourably compared with those of the past.

It is precisely in such meticulousness of attention that Edgar Morelli has always excelled as a director, and it is not therefore so surprising that he has made such a success of this production. Its success was laid on a firm foundation of excellent casting and design. Bill Dowd's design for



Barbara Lake (Phair) in the Doll's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*

Oliver's living-room was superb in its sense of (early-recently-warmed) period, the epitome of early 60s inner-suburban Australian style for either, look off!

The cast featured some of the most experienced and skilled actors and actresses in Perth and the standard of performance was awfully high. Helen Tapp's Olive combined generosity and warmth with vulnerability. Her careful observation of the role was complemented by her controlled execution of it. Rita Parnell's performance was Emma can only be described as superb — in a cast less uniformly strong it would have stolen the show, but as it was, with Faith Clayton's asexual Pearl, Phil Wilbraham's troubled Roo and Maureen Ogden's feckless Barney to surround and complement it, it became a minor highlight amidst such shining.

Meticulously careful attention to the pace and rhythm of the play gave a sense of focus to its key moments, doing full justice to the intrinsic strength of the script. The execution of this production cannot be publicly deemed as proof enough of the quality of *The Hole's* text.

Then good scripts are the bottom line for good theatre as an axiom rarely proven by the running at the same time in Perth of another Edgar Wallace production featuring a generally strong cast which has had nothing like the acclaim given *The Hole*. The problem with the Playhouse production of Alan Ayckbourn's *South Western* here, I'd suggest, almost entirely with the script. It seems as though responsiveness with the gimmicks of alternate narrative lines, and the inclusion of a chance element in the choice of which of the two main narrative lines will be performed on any given night of the season has blinded Ayckbourn to the essential quality of the narratives themselves.

His failure for most audiences, and a keen sense of social stereotypes is not enough to sustain an audience's interest in either or both of *South Western* or *Devils at the Door* for the whole of a full length production. In such circumstances one was left with the interest generated by the set, a marvellous construction representing a hillside in the country and designed with an eye to a kind of realism rarely encountered in such sets these days by Simon Nolan, and by the stalwart efforts of the cast to bring some life to an eternally empty exercise. All deserved credit for effort, and some, notably Raymond Dwyer (as a mildly eccentric GP and father of the two women)



Caroline McKinnon (as Dorcas) and James Beattie (as a comical retired cop) managed a little extra sparkle. All things considered however, it was a shame to see so much talent and energy wasted on such tired and boring material.

It could not be said of *Carson, Son of Sleep* at WAIT's Hayman Theatre, that it was true, inside the subject matter of the play, totalitarian tyranny and oppression of human rights and the human spirit, is one with a continuing, and perhaps even an increasing, relevance to our everyday life. But it has to be said that the first half of the production at least allowed for boredom.

Again the problem was partially with the script itself. Carson's epic parable, employing the metaphor of the piglet and its efforts on a populace for its totalitarian message, lacks the enlivening sense of the idiosyncrasies of individual character, and most of all the humour which distinguishes Beattie's efforts in the show. This tragedy in the script was somewhat relieved in the second half by the inclusion of a number of powerful dialogues delving the nature of totalitarian thought and practice, however these were imbued with a sense of sombre seriousness which became oppressive by night's end.

Phil Thompson's directorial debut for WAIT, *Son of Sleep* was a courageous but perhaps overly-ambitious choice of play. The production was long on admirable political sentiment, but a little short on sustained dramatic power.

## Dazzled and delighted

### MASKED

by Christine McCormick

James Beattie, Paul English, Olive Good, Caroline McKinnon, Gerald Hirstwood and James Ryan at the National's Society Findings

Modelled on *Caliban* Robinson and his company. The Space Parts Puppet Arts Theatre. Opened September 30 1981. Princes Max Theatre. Eventually. W.A. Not Done. Stuart Flint. Last. Peter Wilson. Ian Thompson. (Photo courtesy)

The Space Parts Puppet Arts Theatre recently presented to the general public a show which they have been successfully performing to secondary schools in and around Perth. Modelled in a virtual two-man show in which puppet-master Peter Wilson and apprentice puppeteer Ian Thompson seldom leave the stage. The first half of the show traces in rapid succession, the history of puppetry from the use of the marionette to the development of rod and hand puppets. The class, French clown, Petrot is featured in seemingly endless forms and steps in a presentation which left this 'kid' completely dazzled and delighted.

Part two is a fictional account of the events which followed the Dutch Batavia massacre and subsequent trial in which two condemned murderers were cast adrift in Western Australia. Narrated by one of the 'two men', Kathryn Robinson's dramatic script speculates on what became the first white race to live in Australia. Stunning imagery, music, music, and an eerie set designed by Stuart Flint along with an alarmingly 'real' skeleton provided a chilling contrast to the light-hearted first half.

Modelled in the first in a series of public performances scheduled by this unique and versatile company. Let us hope we will not have long to wait before the next one.

# THEATRE *guide*

## VIC

### ARENA NOUVEAU THEATRE (0393253)

**Anthill** Two plays in the *Not Dreaming But Waking* programme, director Nick Tseufas. **Waking Up** by Franco Rella and Denis P. Côté. **Antip Dreaming** by Jenny Boulton performed by Peggy Wallace. Throughout Nov.

### ARENA THEATRE (3421937)

**Uddi! Pa Say Ya Love Me Dressed** and performed by the Magpie TIE Team for senior secondary students. Throughout Nov. In Schools Programme.

**Accidentally Yours** — Lower primary. **Get The Power** — Upper primary.

### ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (0394355)

**Touring Motown Country** You're A Good Man Charlie Brown from the Ensemble Theatre, Sydney. Throughout Nov.

### BANANA LOUNGE COMEDY ROOM (4192669)

A succession of the best of Melbourne's underground comedy. Late shows Fri and Sat.

### COMEDY CAFE BYO RESTAURANT (4192669)

**Carnegie Knowledge by Historiobus Bosch Comedy Ensemble**. Peter Moon, Eddie Zandberg, Ian McFayden and Mary Anna Fahy.

### COMEDY THEATRE (9623333)

**Chicago**, a vaudeville musical based on the play by Maurine Dallas Watkins, director Richard Whymeth, musical arrangements by John Kander and lyrics by Fred Ebb, with Nancy Hayes, Geraldine Turner, Terrence Donavan, Judi Connell, George Spartzels and J.P. Webster. Self-to success production of this Broadway musical about corruption and the media in the thirties. To Nov 14.

### GRAMA RESOURCE CENTRE (3475849)

**Touring Victorian Country** and Adelaide with *Stranger Than Superman* by Roy Kift. This show explodes myths and myths concerning the disabled. The Transition Show. From school to the workplace. Also a workshop performance of *The 62 Show*. Nov 23-29.

### CROSSWINDS COMMUNITY THEATRE (057/629366)

**Freeze** A cabaret show about the Home By-pass. Starts Nov 6.

### FOURS COMPANY COMMUNITY THEATRE (663/311753)

**Watch The Step** A transition show for upper primary. By Fours Company. Touring schools in the Central Highlands.

### HANDSPAN THEATRE (419978)

**Judy Meloni and the 5 o'clock Tipar** at the Ballarat Regional Education Centre, St Paul's Hall. Nov 14-20.

**Beasty Combinations** of the Myer Music Bowl on Nov 22.

### HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (6632211)

**They're Playing Our Song** by Neil Simon and Marvin Hamlisch, with Jacki Weaver and John Waters. Return of the hugely popular, two-hander Simon musical. Throughout Nov.

### LA MAMA (3476085)

Two short plays. **Uncultured Pearls** by Judy Raphael and **Animate** is *Everything* by Boy Getland. Nov 4-15.

### LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (4196325)

**Fairground Snags**, director Terry O'Connell, with Mick Conway. Throughout Nov. Upstairs. Shows changing weekly.

### MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (6544000)

**Antheasum Theatre: Amadeus** by Peter Shaffer, director John Sumner, with Bruce Myles, Frederic Parslow, Sally McKeure and Gary Down. Shaffer's talent hit about the genius of Mozart and the jealousy of his real Salieri. To Nov 28. Russell Street Theatre. The Proctor by Sandy McCulloch, director, Ray Lawler. To Nov 21.

**Antheasum 2** Return season of *Beecham* by Caryl Chessman and Ned Sherris, director Ron Hodger, designer Christopher Smith. To Nov 29. Return season of *Argonne* by Sophocles, director Roger Oakley. Starts Nov 5.

### MILL THEATRE COMPANY (052/323310)

**Sparkling Occasion** Mill's first fund-raiser. Food, fun and festivities. Nov 14.

### MUSHROOM TROUPE (3767364)

**Savage Love** ice-age rock, with Alison Richards. Faye Bandrup and Neil Gries. Starts Nov 4 at the Pire Factory.

### MURRAY RIVER PERFORMING GROUP (055/217615)

**They'll Tell You About Me** A one-man show devised and performed by Robert Penner at the Wipac. A bloody good look at Australia. To Nov 21. **Beggars Banquet** A large gathering on the banks of the Murray River at 3pm on Sun Nov 15.

### MIXED COMPANY (4191154)

**The Melbourne Show** by Mixed Company. Performed at inner suburban factories throughout Nov.

### PLAYBOX (634686)

**Downstairs** The Manonette Theatre of Australia's production of General MacArthur in Australia by Roger Pulvers, director Richard Bradshaw, designer Patrick Cook. 'MacArthur the hero, hardly aware that Australians too were at war'. To Nov 8.

**Upstairs** *A Night in The Arms Of Reason* by Clem Gorman, director Camilo Gartner. A strange reunion of males of twenty years where the truth is revealed. To Nov 15.

### UNIVERSAL THEATRE (4193411)

**Sparks** a political revue by Barry Oakley, David Williamson, Steven Sewell, Patrick Cook, Tim Robertson, David Allen and Steve Vizard, with Max Gillies. Throughout Nov.

### WEST COMMUNITY THEATRE (3767034)

**Whatever Stays by The West Coast Troupe**, touring Western Region primary schools. *Just A Simple Ride* with Phil Sumner, Ian Shires and Richard Zatorski. Available for bookings throughout Nov.

### WOOLLY JUMPERS TIE TEAM (052/323318)

A play on an Australian theme for Poppy Kettle at the Springring — The Geelong Festival. Nov 2.

For entries contact Connie Kramer on 8615448.

## ACT

### CANBERRA THEATRE (457880)

**Cambridge University Revue**, Presented by Michael Edgley International Ltd. Nov 19 and 21.

### JIGSAW THEATRE COMPANY (470781/485357)

**War of the Words** by Graham Pitts, director Graeme Brooker. Playing



primary schools throughout Nov  
Hymn, a group devised show for pre-  
schools director, Graeme Broome  
Throughout Nov

#### **RITS (485311)**

*The Naked Wear Show*, a Bates and  
Woodward theatre and bar  
production

Throughout Nov

#### **THEATRE THREE (474332)**

*Ready River* by Dick Diamond

For entries contact Janet Healey on  
494768

## **NSW**

#### **ENSEMBLE THEATRE (9395877)**

*The Elephant Man* by Bernard  
Pomerance, director Hayes Gordon  
designer Shaun Gorton  
Internationally successful drama of  
his deously deformed John Merrick and  
his acceptance in Victorian society  
To mid Nov

#### **FRANK STRAIN'S BULL 'N BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (3574627)**

*Hampstead to Hollywood* director  
Frank Strain, musical director Julie  
Symonds

Throughout Nov

#### **HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE**

##### **CAMPANY, Newcastle (349/26255)**

*Fanny's Theatre Restaurant* (262435)  
*Hamel on Ice*, Throughout Nov  
*Piccadilly Restaurant* (24531) *Yule Play*  
it Again Starts Nov 3

#### **KIRKILLI PUB THEATRE (321415)**

*The Plaster & the Show* by Perry  
Quinton and Paul Chubb with Zoe  
Berman

Throughout Nov

#### **MARIAN STREET THEATRE**

##### **(498316)**

*Once Upon A Mattress*, music by Mary  
Rodgers lyrics by Marshall Barer and  
Dean Fuller director John Milton,  
Throughout Nov

#### **MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (378555)**

*Pygmalion* director, Peggy  
Mortimer with Ron Fraser  
Throughout Nov

#### **NEW THEATRE (5193403)**

*On The Waterfront* by Nick Enright  
director, Frank Barnes Nick Enright's  
very successful documentary/musical  
on the depression years in SA, into  
Nov *Yabba Mow* by John McGrath

director, Maria Armstrong Starts mid  
Nov

#### **NIMROD THEATRE (695660)**

*Upstairs Last Day in Wood/Komoo/oo*  
by Ron Blair, director John Bell  
designer, Tony Tapp, with Pat Ewson  
Lee Dayman Peter Collingwood, Ron  
Falk, Stuart Campbell and Robert  
Alexander Blair's black comedy about  
Sydney urban development To mid  
November *Tales From The Wattle  
Woods* by Odon von Horwath  
translated by Christopher Hampton,  
director Aubrey Melior with Cathy  
Downes, Michele Foxton, Barry Otto  
Dedre Rubenstein Anna Volska and  
John Walton The search for  
his goodness against mounting  
pressures in 30's Germany Starts Nov  
25

*Downstairs Eyes Of The Wives* by  
Tony Strachan director Neil  
Armfield About the clash of New  
Guinea native culture with Australian  
imperialism Starts Nov 4

#### **NOMADS THEATRE COMPANY**

##### **(966/217185)**

*Autonomous Community Centre*  
*Bedfellows* by Barry Oakley, director  
Peter Carroll Throughout Nov

#### **NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF**

##### **(35713200)**

Theatre for primary schools and *The  
Unheard World* of Jasper Lawson for  
secondary schools directors Ian  
Watson and Nola Collier  
Throughout Nov

#### **O'MALLEY THEATRE COMPANY**

##### **(333217)**

*Stables Theatre* Shorts, a selection of  
one act plays in repertory including  
*Drums Along The Diamantina* by Tim  
Gooding director Lex Mannes *Slow  
Death To Infinity* by Gordon  
Graham, director John Gaden *News  
Unheard* by Roger Pulvers, director  
George Miller *In The Where We  
Come In* by Mä Perrin, director Robyn  
Nevin and *Mrs Thelby F* by John  
Remont director Phil Noyce with  
Terry Bader John Hannan Robert  
Hughes Mel Gibson Elizabeth  
Alexander Sandy Gore and Elizabeth  
Chance Throughout Nov

#### **PHILLIP STREET THEATRE**

##### **(332879)**

*Blood of The Lamb* by Bruce Mason A  
Court Theatre Christchurch  
presentation To Nov 8 *Flashers* by  
Roger Hall, director Peter Williams

Starts Nov 12 Two very different NZ  
pieces

#### **PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY**

##### **(357211)**

*Bondi Pavilion Theatre* *The Corn is  
Green* by Emily Williams, director  
Doreen Harrop Throughout Nov

#### **O THEATRE (047/218738)**

*On Our Selection* by Sheila Rudd The  
popular Dad and Dave saga with  
music Pamrith throughout Nov

#### **STUDIO SYDNEY (7713333)**

*I Sent A Letter To My Love* by Bernice  
Rubens director Graham Cory, with  
Leila Blake and Ross Sharp  
Throughout Nov

#### **SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR**

##### **YOUNG PEOPLE (8833448)**

Free drama workshops on weekends,  
includes playbuilding mime dance,  
puppetry, design radio and video  
*Youth Theatre Showcase* *The Tribe of  
Tribekhu* playbuilt by the cast  
director Gerry Tascovsky and *The  
Green Butterfly* adapted from Wilson  
Goldring director Michael Webb  
Nov 27 and 28

#### **SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY**

##### **(3584322)**

*Drama Theatre* *SOH* (20355)  
*Conchita* by Robert David  
MacDonald director Rodney Fisher,  
designer Brian Thomson with Peter  
Carroll, Neil Fitzpatrick Peter  
Cousiers, Jane Harders Jennifer  
Hagen Linda Cropper Robert van  
Mackelenberg Matthew O'Sullivan,  
Frank Garfield and Scott Higgins  
Starts Nov 10 *Opera Theatre* *SOH*  
*Cynthia de Bergerac* by Edmond  
Rostand translated by Louis Nowra  
director Richard Wherrett set  
designer John Stoddart costume  
designer Luciana Amighi music  
Sarah de Jong, with John Bell Robyn  
Nevin Ron Haddock and Robin  
Ramsey Re-run of last year's brilliant  
production with Robyn Nevin as place  
of Helen Morse Outstanding  
performance by Bell  
Nov 8-21

#### **THEATRE ROYAL (2316111)**

*The Rocky Horror Show* by Richard  
O'Brien director David Togun  
designer Brian Thomson with Daniel  
Adams Steve J Spence and Stuart  
Wagstaff Throughout Nov

For entries contact Carole Long on  
3571200/9593010

## NT

### QAMWIN THEATRE GROUP

*You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* by Charles M Schultz, director: Terry Sooyzinski. Starts Nov 26

**TIE-ONE, Theatre in Education/Greece in Education,**

Touring Darwin in primary schools with *Dick and Coars, Trees, I've Got A Name* and *The Long and Short Of It* Throughout Nov

For enquires contact Tim Gow on 0149424

## QLD

### ARTS THEATRE (362344)

*Double Edge* by Leslie Darson and Peter Whelan, director: William Daniels. To Nov 7

*Behind The Arts*, conceived and directed by Ken McCaffrey and Eric Hauff. Review: light hearted songs and sketches. Starts Nov 10

### LA BOUTE THEATRE (361622)

*Mary Barnes* by David Edgar, director: Malcolm Blacklock, with Keith Arent and Jennifer Flowers. Absorbing true story of a schizophrenic cured in an alternative psychotheic experiment and a study of the energy of the 60's. To Nov 14. London Editz by Frank Heatherley and Jeremy Berlow, director: Robert Kingham. Music and sketches from *The Happy Shepherd* a nostalgic trip back to the war-time scene! Starts Nov 20

### QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (3513661)

**SOLO Theatre.** *On Our Selection* by Bert Bailey, director: Peter Duncan, designer: Graham McClean. Dead Dave and the family plus sundry hangers on and a few songs. Recently a smash hit at Nimrod. Nov 8-21

*Her Majesty's Theatre.* *Annie* by Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse and Martin Chamin, with David Clendinning and Teresa Harbottle. QTC's highly successful production returns to Brisbane after a state tour. Starts Nov 26

### THE TN COMPANY (3525133)

Woodward Theatre. *Kelvin Grose* *Manly Courage* and *Her Children* by Bertolt Brecht, director: Bryan Nissen, designers: David Bell and Mike

Bridges, with Jennifer Blockedge, Judith Anderson and Errol O'Neill. Tragic loss and the business imperative. One of Brecht's perennially popular works. Starts Nov 18

For enquires contact Jeremy Ridgeman on 3772519

## SA

### CORE THEATRE (2673751)

Sheldon Theatre, N Adelaide. *Broadstreet.* An historical study of women in Australia, examining the effects on women of a male dominated culture. Nov 5-19

### O THEATRE (2323631)

*The Fantasticks* by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, director: Peter Goers, musical director: Barry Hill, designer: Colin Ewings

### STAGE COMPANY (3336283)

*The Space Festival Centre.* *Sandy Lee Live at Nur Dal* by Rob George, director: John Noble. A country and western singer on tour in Vietnam — interwoven with an examination of attitudes to the war. Starts Nov 26

### STATE THEATRE COMPANY (3161551)

*Playhouse.* *No End Of Silence* by Howard Barker, director: John Gades, with Jeremy Booth, Peter Crossley, Patrick Frost, Robert Grubb, Alexander Hay, Deborah Kennedy and Geoffrey Rush. The first major production of one of Britain's most contemporary playwrights. To Nov 7

*The Threespenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, director: George Whaley, with Marilyn Allen, Peter Cummins, Vanessa Dowling, John Gregg, Robert Grubb, Joanne Lewis and Deborah Little. Probably Brecht's most popular musical. Starts Nov 14

*Prize Theatre.* *The Sad Songs of Anne Sande* by Doreen Clarke, director: Margaret Davis, with Isabel Kirk, Stuart McCreery, Jacqui Phillips and Christine Woodland. The new play about two women who seek refuge in a women's shelter questions the effectiveness of the helping professionals. Starts Nov 20

### THEATREFUL OF FANTASY/THE ACTING COMPANY (2740361)

*The Space.* *Space Movers* by Nick Gill, director: Sue Rider. Two children

are taken on an intergalactical voyage by the Space Movers and return to reality with some new perspectives. Nov 3-7 then country tour

### TROUPE THEATRE (2711552)

*Cloud Nine* by Caryl Churchill, director: Richard Collins. A highly enjoyable farce about sexuality. Starts Nov 19

For enquires contact The Association of Community Theatres on 2675588

## WA

### HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (3216266)

UK Theatre Productions and Chappell and Co present *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*, director: Jenny McNaë, musical director: Peter Bandy, choreographer: Barry Scragg, with Noel Farmer. Nov 3-14

### HOLE IN THE WALL (3612482)

*Dominion Job* by Gordon Graham, director: Edgar Melcott, with Chris Greenslade, Peter Hardy and Andy King. Nov 5-21

### REGENT THEATRE (3611557)

*An Evening's Intercourse* with Barry Humphries. Dame Edna at it again. Nov 3

### SPACE PARTS PUPPET COMPANY (3333333)

Touring metropolitan high schools with *Masked.* Touring south west with *Frogs and Faces* and *Shape and a Promise.* Throughout Nov

For enquires contact Margaret Schwan on 3411173

## TAS

### POLYGON THEATRE (348216)

*Lamb of God* by John Simonson. In rehearsal during November

### SALAMANCA THEATRE COMPANY (335256)

Touring Hobart schools with *Anne's Coming Out* and *Wood Song*. Nov 2-3, 9-13 and 18-20. Workshops with Dave Allen on new scripts for 1992. Nov 4-6 and 22-30. *Muh Arts Nigari* in Salamanca Theatre Rehearsal Space. Nov 6. *Joint Theatre Forum* Weekend. Nov 7 and 8. Public performances of *Anne's Coming Out* and *Wood Song* for Festival Week. Nov 22-30

For enquires contact Jon Fogarty on 336822 ext 2740

# OPERA info

Contributing Editor: Justin Macdonnell

## STAMPEDE FOR AIDA

Canberra Opera had barely got its tickets on sale for their spectacular new production of *Aida* due next month at the National Sports Centre when there was a rush at the box office. Bookings have come from all over Australia for this unique event and I understand that various package tours for both plane and coach parties have been sold out within days of their announcement. It would be rare to think that if the project is a success this year it could become an annual event with some of the other blockbuster pieces such as *Tosca* being given similar treatment.

## NEW LAMPS FOR OLD?

In a rather complicated vote-fake, Victorian State Opera seems to be buying back part of the farm. Amongst the productions scheduled for 1982 is the revival of their highly successful production of Mozart's *Idomeneo* premiered in 1979.

The problem is that in the meantime the VSO had sold the sets and costumes designed by John Freeson to the Australian Opera for inclusion in the latter's 1980 season. The Victorians are now in the quaint position of having to buy back a production which given the alleged free exchange of materials between companies, one wonders why they had to sell in the first place.

## QUEENSLAND IN REVERSE?

After the closure of the Queensland Opera Company and the announcement of the forthcoming Live Opera of Queensland as its replacement, it seemed as though the future of professional opera in that State might be set on a firm footing.

There were rumours that a sale of \$1m was being conducted by the State Government as the basis for funding in 1982 and the bipartisan composition of the new Board indicated that a sizeable reprieve might be reached with the real Queensland Light Opera Company. The State Government budget, however, which was brought down at the end of September has dealt a severe blow to these hopes. The new company has been granted only \$300,000 which is barely \$50,000 more than the meagre grant that the old company had in 1980. Meanwhile, the Light Opera Company has received \$140,000 from the State.

It seems certain that when chronic underfunding was at the base of its projectors' problems, and ultimately the

reason for its organisation, the Government can proceed with eyes wide open down the same dangerous track. One cannot help feeling that if this is the best solution which can be reached they would then be better off giving the money to some other existing arts organisation in the State.

## RITA HUNTER IN CONCERT

The distinguished British Soprano Rita Hunter, who has been recently stunning audiences in Sydney with her performance of Lady Macbeth in Verdi's opera, will appear for the first time as a concert singer in next year's Festival of Sydney.

Mrs Hunter who is internationally renowned for the major Verdi and Wagner roles especially in her home base at the English National Opera, will give a recital on Saturday, January 30 at the Sydney Town Hall of songs from the major roles with which she has been closely identified such as Norma, Aida and the Tambourer, Turandot and Aida.

Her accompanist will be the well-known Australian mezzo Laura Elm.

## THEA MUSGRAVE'S VISIT

The distinguished Scottish-born composer Thea Musgrave will be in Australia for the premiere of her Opera *A Christmas Carol* by the State Opera of South Australia on November 14. Ms Musgrave will give four lectures during her stay, two each at the University of Adelaide and the Adelaide College of Art and Education. These will be open to the public and those interested should contact the relevant institutions.

Recently, though the composer has some free time and will be visiting Melbourne and Sydney in a private capacity, the State Opera has been unable to elicit a further of interest from organisations in those cities.

The visit will be Ms Musgrave's first to Australia and has been sponsored by a somewhat slackish contribution of Myer Adelaide stores and the British Council.

This will be only the second production of *A Christmas Carol* in the World. Its premiere having been in Norfolk, Virginia just two years ago. Its next appearance is in a production by the Royal Opera Covent Garden at the Cushman Theatre in London.

With these credentials one would have thought that a lot of commission at say, the NSW Conservatorium might have had something to gain from one of her lectures?



Rita Hunter



Thea Musgrave's visit to the 1982 Festival



Thea Musgrave

by Justin Macdonnell

It may be like harping on a tired old theme but one cannot too greatly emphasise the effect, firstly that the process of the Australia Council's Inquiry into opera and music theatre had on the various opera companies in Australia and secondly, that the rejection of the resultant report by the Federal Government has had subsequently on the 'mood' of opera managements.

And, it is not just the money. It is a bunker mentality which has intensified around the country with each organisation separately digging in and away from its fellows for what each sees as the long cold winter ahead. It's a condition which may be observed in all of the arts at the moment as back cuts at all subsidising levels hit and as activity is caught in the cost-push inflationary trend. Fortunately, however, CAPPA to which many of the dance and drama companies belong, might just be sufficiently strong and coherent to head off the worst effects of the drought in these areas. In opera, unless something quite extraordinary happens, the reverse is likely to be the case and isolationism will prevail.

Immediately prior to the Inquiry a few faint hints of co-operation had started to show through. South Australia's *Three Men Show* and the VSO's *Pearl Fishers* had both appeared as part of The Australian Opera's 1978/79 season in Sydney. Joint subscriptions abounded round the country (whether they were good or bad in themselves is, at this point, irrelevant). They were at least symptomatic of co-operation. Managements were starting to emerge from their blindness and to consider the possibility that six separately guarded bastions, city to city, were not necessarily, or even inevitably, the best way to manage operatic production and performance in this country in the 1980's and, moreover, that the even-distribution dollar might be more effectively spent

in the exercise of a little neighbourliness rather than in segregation.

The rejection of the report turned back the clock and saw everyone scrambling for their own survival. It is fair to say that, in many quarters, things are now back even beyond 'square one'. The question being least of all considered now is how the whole genre of management production and performance across the country should interrelate. Rather it is who in the operating futures market will keep their heads above water. Because for all the many fine observations and proposals made in that report one of the issues with which the Inquiry failed to come to grips, is whether we in fact, need in Australia six and, if you include New Zealand then in the Pacific region, seven separate opera-producing bodies. The question stands even allowing for the currencies of distance and demography with which we all contend.

Indeed, one might go further and question whether this configuration of management and company structures will be even relevant in the 1990's with the emergence of the quite aggressive entrepreneurial grid that must be consequent upon the opening of the new arts centres both capital and provincial and the increasing degree of collaboration between them through their Confederation. Would not opera perhaps be better served within such a multi-disciplinary context rather than at the moment, with its highly developed ghetto mentality?

One does not see these issues being addressed in any operative forum currently. It is not one of the agenda items of the Opera Conference — which is the association of professional companies in the country — that it never reached the stage of being able to afford a sufficiently strong or on-going secretariat to evolve and implement any sort of overall forward strategy for the sharing of resources and production amongst its members.

The frequent duplication from state to state of productions of many key repertoire pieces year after year has been a sad business. Of course, every



Robert Cook as  
the opera hero in  
Aida  
Opera House, Sydney



# NTALITY



YACC's Pearl Fishery appears at Perth (1978), AD's 20th Anniversary



407 La Traviata — one of many

organisation is able to advance reasons why they need right now such and such a production for audience growth and stability, for casting reasons, for touring reasons etc. But frequently one cannot help feeling that sheer bloody-mindedness and lack of foresight and co-operation had led to patterns such as *La Traviata* SA&O 1978, AD 1978, WA, 1980, VSO 1981, *Die Fledermaus* WA 1974, Queensland 1976, SO&A 1979, VSO 1981, AD 1982 or *Faust* Queensland 1979, VSO 1981, SA&O 1982.

There have of course been some fine examples of collaboration. The recent westward tour of Adelaide and Perth of the Australian Opera's *Le Bohème* struck a conspicuous example. The SA&O's *Can You Take* which has already been in New Zealand and about to go to Scotland and, we hear on the grapevine, elsewhere on loan, may well end up being the most borrowed production in Australian operatic history. These are, however, aberrations and certainly not the result of any coherent through-through or adopted plan.

To give an example, if the State Companies, even alone, were serious in their desire to share resources it would not be beyond the wit of man to devise a formula for the manufacture of, for example, six new productions around the country per year — two each say, in Adelaide and Melbourne, one each in Brisbane and Perth. Such a system would have kept the overall output supplied adequately with revivals and exchanges and generally have reduced the cost and wastage of stock. Hence in any one quarter should not be apportioned.

But, it must be said that in place of ad hoc bilateral exchange from time to time we have need of a serious attempt to involve a blue print for the life of a production throughout the country whereby say, a *Don Giovanni* originating in Melbourne might subsequently tour to Adelaide and Perth in year "A", be available in Canberra, Brisbane in year "B" and thence for revival in year "C" back in Melbourne. Such a cycle must greatly reduce the need for the

maintenance of independent workshops and wardrobe facilities by separate companies in each centre as opposed to amongst a group of companies in a centre.

It can ensure that a production well built is not left to waste in storage, as many of the very best state productions have been, by eking out its existence profitably somewhere in the country providing a pool of continuous employment (albeit on a rather nomadic basis) for the individual artist and give a greater exposure to a wider audience nationally of the directorial and design talent which exists at the state level but which all too frequently has been ignored in the national sphere.

Whatever, the end of it all seems abundantly clear that the financial/organisational crunch will hit in late 1982 and with a vengeance in 1983. Even the successful Victorian and South Australian Companies living off bread, or nearly bread, incomes will be unable to withstand the inflationary pressure. The Australian Opera with its cancellations in Newcastle and Melbourne last month shows it is already experiencing acute difficulties which even a 10% increase in public funding and a growing private sector support cannot constrain.

The companies in Perth and Canberra are staggered. Finally and the great money announced for the new company in Queensland gives little hope that it will fare much better than its predecessor.

Meanwhile, the Arts Centres from Townsville to Perth continue to chase and, with varying degrees of success, exploit entrepreneurial product from around the country and even from abroad.

Is it too much to hope that before the sand runs out altogether and opera is thrown back into the level of the 1960's, that someone may be brave enough to come out of the bunker, knock a few heads together and shout — from the roof tops if necessary — that without goodwill and co-operative action (as opposed to the platitudes of co-operation) everyone will be down the drain?

# international

## Music and drama at Bayreuth

by John Carmody

In 1835 Queen Victoria told Wagner that she thought it would be "nice" if his operas could be translated into Italian for performance in London: she expressed a view that is still all too common, especially in Australia, that opera being an unusual and exotic entertainment, is best not understood. It is the attitude of the current regime in the Australian Opera to whom opera is an insubstantial ephemeral refinement after a day of reality, no more something than a sorbet.

This attitude is also not uncommon amongst patrons and practitioners of what is variously described as the "legitimate theatre". They often have the idea that opera is undramatic, a misconception stemming from a misunderstanding or ignorance of the different conventions and a failure to recognise that every art has its conventions and can be properly appreciated only when they are fully understood and assimilated.

Bayreuth — despite the acknowledged difficulty of coming to proper grips with Wagner's oeuvre — is the ideal place to recognise the great dramatic potency of opera or music drama as Wagner preferred to call it. This is partly because the season is only a short one (four weeks with a few weeks' rehearse) and partly because of the enthusiasm and commitment that come from the fact that all the participants — singers, instrumentalists, stage workers — have given up their summer holiday in order to participate. In addition, the Festival Direction always engages fine and imaginative producers and they are loyal to Wagner's own thinking and practice.

He wrote a good deal about the philosophy of his theatre and one of his most important books is *Opera and Drama*. In fact, in writing as early as 1850 to a friend about the Festival that established only in 1876 he spoke of "having all friends of the music drama to my dramatic music festival". He considered the theatre "the most comprehensive, the most influential of all artistic institutions" and he endorsed the view of Joseph II of Austria that the function of the theatre is "to contribute to the elevation of taste and morals."

Wagner was widely read in philosophy, especially the German philosophers, and

German theatre and the arts generally shared a strong philosophical core. So Pierre Chénier's famous literary production of *The King of the Netherlands* evoked more than a vigorous and prolonged vocal response in the Festspielhaus. Pamphlets were written attacking and defending the production and the musical direction by Pierre Boulez. The production is well discussed with much heat of approbation or condemnation.

Victoria was similarly perturbed when Karajan returned in 1977 to conduct at the Opera for the first time in years. It was rumoured that he was about to become General Music Director and immediately there were demonstrations (pro and contra) the theatre was virtually picketed, political leaders were replaced under unwelcome signs.

So German audiences generally come to the theatre well-prepared, often with text in hand for interval reading and with high expectations. Sometimes, as the "perfect performance" is sought, there are a little unrealistic; then disappointment is vocalised just as vigorously as approval.

The new production of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, by the composer's grandson Wolfgang Wagner (who is also Director of the Festspielhaus) evoked a surprising amount of booring, possibly because it was a conventional "safe" realisation. It also moved many of the critics possibilities of the street not seen at the end of Act II when the action was comically confined and worse: none was made at all of the numerous windows in the facade; in these respects the Sydney production was more lively and daring — pillows and other missiles came from all the windows and a real front-of-all developed in most other respects — and especially in its casting — the Wagner production was successful. Both Hans Sachs (Hermann Weitz) the shoemaker-poet who is emotionally and philosophically the central character, and Süsser Beckmesser (Tobias Clerk (Hermann Preis)) rival in music and unsuccessfulness, for the love of Eva Pogner, were both youngish men (about forty) for the benefit of the very young, which made the romance interest and Eva's undoubted affection for Sachs, far more plausible. Just as important (and again in contrast to conventional practice) Beckmesser was not parodied at all — he is a potent certainly but we have our feelings and his move is not at all dull, his humiliation in the final scene was all the more affecting as was Sachs's pointedly driving him back into the Guild.



Bayreuth Festival production of *Lohengrin*

The other productions were altogether different and far less literal in their conception. We saw the last performance of Wolfgang Wagner's production of *Tristan* prior to a new staging for the centenary of the work next year. Wagner emphasised the realistic quality of the opera and the symbolism was impressive: for example the ceremony of the Gailan Memorial is celebrated in a huge chamber like a vast Gothicapse formed by massive pillars that curved inwards as they rose. These same pillars were used in Act II for King Lear's castle — but then they curved outwards.

In *Lohengrin*, too, the sun established the atmosphere of the action. They were by the great Gieseler (Heiler) who uses gigantic masks in everything he does which made fascinating shadow patterns that changed with the lighting, much use was also made of the masked patterns of the soldiers' lances (the stage at times resembled an Alderlie painting) and costumes of chiaroscuro — the conflict between the powers of light (Lohengrin and Elsa) and of darkness (Herrard and Telramund) could hardly have been more starkly or overpoweringly displayed.

The two productions which will remain longest in my mind however which continue to exercise it and are unarguably the finest most imaginative and technically covered — virtuosic indeed, — of any sort that I have ever seen were *The Flying Dutchman* directed by Hans Kap-



for a distinguished protégé of the famous Berlin producer and theatrical florist, Wilfried Felsenstein and *Tosca* and *Pavlo* by the renowned Freydisman, Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. Yet these two were achieved by entirely different means.

Kapler boldly reversed the usual interpretation of the work — a man's quest for the perfect woman — and made the whole thing Scia's dream. So Scia was on stage the entire time and was moved in and out of our direct perspective on a hydraulic platform. Scene changes were effected almost instantaneously as upper parts of walls were flown out and lower parts dropped to horizontal or almost horizontal positions. These changes to the stage picture with imaginative lighting created numerous surrealistic illusions — one often felt that the spirit of René Magritte hovered close by. The result was set on this superb achievement by the dramatic (in every sense of the word) performance of the great American singer, Simon Estes, in the title role. He was always formidable, from the first appearance of his immense ship, its prow an enormous pair of hands. At the same time it was a tangible yet dream-like performance.

Tosca on the other hand, was done overboard with lighting which played innumerable constantly-changing interpretive variations on the simple but conceptually unified, yet. This lighting complex and virtuosic, was as central to

the explanation of Wagner's theme as the orchestral or vocal parts. There were 220 lighting cues (each of which had taken in rehearsal at least an hour to set up) far more than the Australian Opera would use in a handful of productions, and the difference — in sheer technique and imagination — shows how impoverished Australian attempts are in this respect. Whether this is because the equipment at the Opera House and elsewhere is inadequate or our producers simply ignore the expressive possibilities of lighting, I cannot say, but the difference must not be ignored or explained away.

One example must suffice. The last scene of Act II took place under a spreading tree of lush foliage while the ensembles of the lower were mirrored in the metamorphoses of the lighting and the climax of their love, was in total darkness. When a little later King Marko and his party returned from their hunt the board and barked day returned, abruptly the pair of two cyclanmas dropped and suddenly the grey light of dawn broke and the now-warm sun poked its virtually all its leaves. The world was changed miraculously and the integration of music, stage atmosphere and mood was stunning. One could go on and on with such telling examples of magical, thoroughly theatrical interpretation.

The real lesson of *Barsooth* then, is — as Wagner himself well knew — what a potent, profound, disconcerting, confounding and uplifting experience the music theatre can be. The music and drama — each incomplete without the other.

Even Synagogue  
wouldn't deny anyone

# A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens' best-loved story  
brought vividly to life by the  
Australian premiere of a full production  
by The Magicians

Conductor: David Neale  
Director: Peter J. Linn (ex-Darling) (from Japanese  
with revisions by the Magicians) (with 2000+)

THE OPERA THEATRE, SYDNEY  
November 14 17 18 19 20 21 22 and 26 and 27 and 28  
Bookings call 8422

THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

## Disparate after-images

by Ken Hughes

September was a satisfying month to be exposed to the repertoire of the Australian Opera. I saw three productions which left totally disparate after-images: there was an experience that I should willingly have missed.

John Copley's production of *Macbeth* grows in memory until a lasting impression remains of a presentation in full power and authority. Immack's *Donna* remains just that: an unforgettable opera, a masterpiece, which received a fair degree of the excellent due to its performance. As for Puccini's understandably neglected *La Bohème*, what lingers is a grudging respect for the enormous technical heft which risked its resurrection.

*Macbeth*, despite Verdi's fondness for it, is not nearly as fine an opera as *Requiem*, which only a few weeks earlier had failed to stimulate despite the efforts of the same producer, John Copley. It was largely a matter of casting, strange as it may seem: the baritone Robert Allan sang the title role in both operas.

After an unimpressive *Requiem*, he gave us a *Macbeth* that was vocally vigorous and physically powerful. It was dramatically driven by his evil will, elevated though it was to the spirit of his dominating wife. Only Allan's *Nabucco* and perhaps his *Bohème* have surpassed this characterisation.

His *Hamlet* is a Lady *Macbeth* who demonstrates that murder is first a physical act. Strength of body, including vocal power, is her means of communication of overpowering but undiminished will. Verdi wrote in the mid-nineteenth century that these roles were rather to be acted with the voice than sung; he could hardly have erred as the was this part of protagonists acted through their singing and their physical presence.

For the performance I attended no less a figure, then Clifford Grant replaced an indisposed Donald Shanks as Banquo. How long must we wait before Don Copley is mounted and this time, the chance to share a production? Tenor Lamberto Purlan demonstrated in *Macbeth*'s single act that the extraordinary development he displayed some months ago as *Cavala-dore* was not limited to that role. Can he vacuum the superhuman under a producer other than Copley?



John Copley  
in the 1970s  
La Bohème  
Copley  
Puccini  
Robert Allan



Don Copley in the 1970s  
Macbeth  
Copley  
Puccini  
Robert Allan





Elizabeth Fritwell is used to being the 'strong' one. Elizabeth Connell is not.

As for the women, I prefer Shakespeare's three to Verdi's pragmatically necessary three groups. Hindered by singing in Italian, the mixed women cannot sufficiently focus their malice upon Marcella. We become witnesses of stage effects. Speaking of which, the danger of London-based Stollman-Lavender's three grandees and rough nightbirds while remaining practical. He is a welcome addition to the national company's roster of despots.

London has also become the musical home of conductor Charles Mackerras, recently named as the first-ever Australian to become chief conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Was the Australian Opera where from all the more frequently heard? He had no doubt forgetting the unaccountably humorous tendencies, at so much of the rehearsal arrangement. His rarely we hear a conductor of this quality in our opera pit.

One associates Mackerras with the operas of Janáček and I can only help wondering how much he abhors this wretched first conductor to its being good rather than splendid. Significantly, but not generally, would be my guess. Once again, singing is forgotten. Besides, Bergen acts the title role abominably and sings miserably. Elizabeth Fritwell puts her considerable stamp on the Kossakowski's music. But those who recall the original production will still miss the total involvement of Leon Koppel-Wetherill's Jewish

and the vocal thrill of Elizabeth Connell's Kossakowski. I do not recall Connell as a relaxed actress with much dramatic scope, yet she gave a performing strength to the monstrous Kossakowski which Fritwell's can hardly justify women missed.

Following the same line, it is necessary to report that Gregory Dimples's Steva is not as heartrendingly weak and drunken as Robert Card's was. Ron Stevens seems to have tempered his characterisation as the older, low favoured stepbrother, Lada, which leads to wonder about Janáček's future happiness. Her baby's death is a public fact and her rich husband a poor substitute for her imaginary pleasure of the worthless Steva.

Despite the enduring strength and work, now of Allan Lock's songs and the fact that Susan Cullen (though no Mackerras) is competent in the pit. Ample in the production may mean, of its success, to Janáček than to members of the Australian Opera. The striking point is that one cannot help comparing it not only with itself in a previous manifestation, but with the company's current *Verdi's Aida*, which is, where the present Janáček strengths are dulled. After so much by way of comparison, I must admit to not having seen the 1977 cast at Macbeth when Connell and John Miles made an impression that for many may have set an inimitable standard for this season's interpretation.

With what does one compare Pimen's

Golden d'Pavlov? I refer to *La Donna Jekyll*, a virtuous maid, but innocent of the room of Richardson's Pamela Andrews. Higher Golden's dominated the mood almost as much as Moses Leigh and Clarke changed the *Crédito* of *The Fortunate Pilots*. Thus do I profit comparing this month's girls with Richard Bawage's other entries of the season, *The Beggar's Opera* and *Les Huguenots*. I confess in an initial opinion regarding all three. In the event, only the de Mille Tchaikovsky *Beggar's Opera* was unimpeachable: the Pimen was a respectable second to the Mercedes, and was disappointed it had the composer synthesized his flawed talent with the salubrious of musical parody. (Thank you once again, Ewan Tait.)

In California I saw Lynne Carlton, Heather Begg, Richard Gilguy, Thomas Edmunds, and Ronald Macpherson. This was alternating with a completely different cast throughout the run. David Knox had taken over the conducting from Richard Bawage, and the Australian Chamber Orchestra was playing with commitment and accuracy, if not with authentic style.

By adopting the transparent convention that the members of a noble house are governing this diverse world for them and our pleasure, the production fairly effected its theme: there must a criminal birth. Nevertheless, it came across (Dennis, I believe, veritable black-pudding soldiers, of the sort portrayed by Ronald Macpherson) were thought hence in the eighteenth century, then we have, indeed greatly refined out worse of hermit.

For the rest, no missing outstandingly well, though Heather Begg has much to commend her in prison process and voice, a splendid figure of a Marchioness. I thought that both James, Craigie and Edmunds, had not enough to them that I can to encompass the vocal melodies with any degree of similarity. It was the bearing of their voices of the vocal level of "I'll Marry You".

I missed a sad song, a song that only the fact that we were 50 minutes in before the sequence of routine affairs is broken, that is, As I have actually expanded to become a quartet of sorts, and that the controlled crescendo of intensity in Heather Begg's and about the creature was a fine example of post-Mozart Italian set piece. I felt the theatre gutted — it might have been much worse — and thanking God for Mozart. What a leap forward Figure was.

# guide

## ACT

### CANBERRA THEATRE (0976600)

*The Gondoliers* by Gilbert and Sullivan. Canberra Philharmonic Society production. Nov 5, 6 and 7

## QLD

### QUEENSLAND LIGHT OPERA COMPANY

*Her Majesty's Theatre* (2212777) *Die Fledermaus* by Offenbach (in English). Starts Nov 6. A Tribute to Richard Rodgers in concert. In Brisbane City Hall. Starts Nov 12

## SA

### THE STATE OPERA

*A Christmas Carol* by Tessa Murgrove, director, Robin Lowrey conductor, Denis Vaughan, designer, Tom Lingwood, with James Christensen, Thomas Edmonds, Denis Olsen, Edwin Hodgeman, Judith Henley, Heather Ross, Roger Howell, Ruth Gurner, David Brennan. An Australian premiere of Dickens' timeless story as an opera, woven with Christmas themes. Opera House. Nov 14, 17, 19, 21, 24, 26 and 28

## TAS

### VICTORIA STATE OPERA

*La Traviata* by Verdi. John Wilson's highly successful production with designs by Peter Cooke has been an excellent touring vehicle for the Victoria State Opera. This Tasmanian tour follows an earlier tour to Victorian country centres, this year Princess Theatre (Launceston), Nov 26, 28 and 30

## VIC

### THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA

*Princess Theatre* (0452811) *Les Huguenots* by Meyerbeer will now not be performed as part of the season, since it is not possible to present a work of this scale at the Princess Theatre. A special Gala Concert will be held at the Princess Theatre on Saturday Nov 7 in place of the original opening night performance of *Les Huguenots*. The concert will be an all Puccini evening featuring international sopranos Rita Hunter and Marilyn Zachau together with leading Australian Opera stars, Anson Austin, Lamberto Furlan and John Shaw. The Elizabethan Melbourne Orchestra will be conducted by Carlo Felice Cillario. *Norma* by Bellini (in Italian), starring Rita Hunter will now be performed at the Princess Theatre for five performances, instead of the previously scheduled six performances at the Palace Theatre. Nov 17, 20, 22, 25 and 28. *The Marriage of Figaro* by Mozart (in English). A deft combination of comedy and pathos, as the disintegrating relationship of the Count and the Countess. *Airmata* is contrasted with many of the comic antics of the characters surrounding them. Nov 14, 21 and sat Nov 26 and 27. *The Sentenced Bride* by Smetana (in English). A rather dreary new production by an undistinguished Czech team of conductor, Václav, producer, Koci and designer, Hejnova which looks and sounds as though it were prepared for the Folk Opera in 1930. Nov 13, 16, 21, 24 and 28

## WA

### OPERA VIVA

*Octagon Theatre* (3802440) *The Turn of the Screw* by Benjamin Britten. Nov 19, 20, 21, 26, 27 and 28

## ANNE WOOLLIAMS AND THE AB

Anne Woolliams, one of the Australian Ballet's former artistic directors, has formally severed all connections with the company, and gone public with her deep concern for the health of the company as a strongly-worded critic of its management policies. This is how it came about.

When Ms Woolliams, who was Associate Director of the Stuttgart Ballet under John Cranko's leadership, staged his greatest full-length work, *Ongin* for the Australian Ballet, there was a clause in the performing rights contract which specified a 'quid pro quo' be presented when she had rehearsed it. She has returned to the company to direct its revival since the became Dean of Dance at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Earlier this year she auditioned the former Russian dancers Valentina Kozlova and Lured Kozlov in the roles of Tamara and Ongin at the Australian Ballet's request. But the hotel the company was, did not have the time to rehearse them to the point where the world had better with their interpretations of these two much-wrought dramatic roles.

Yet there were the plum roles the company had offered the Kozlovs in inviting them to join as principals for 1981. The next Ms Woolliams learned about the subject was a letter from the Australian Ballet's administrator, Peter Baker telling her that "at some inconvenience to the Stuttgart Ballet, and considerable expense to this company, we have been able to remedy the situation which resulted from your unavailability." This was to bring a former Stuttgart principal, Rina Anderson, to Australia to coach the Kozlovs.

At this point Ms Woolliams was still formally responsible for supervising rehearsals of the company's scheduled works. By then, revival of *Ongin* had April. But she was offered only one dress rehearsal and it was to be a public one. There would be a private audience of something like 2000 people — and the Kozlovs in the main roles. Ms Woolliams, having made sure Rina Anderson was prepared to take over the production as a whole, withdrew her services. The company will still be obliged by contract to engage a Stuttgart Ballet costume designer and hairdressers at the ballet.

This series of events would probably have remained unknown to the world at

large, had the Australian Ballet done the business of inviting Ms Woolliams, the former chief of the Stuttgart Ballet, to give the performance of *Ongin* for the Queen's jubilee. It was the Melbourne Age, without her absence and asked her the reason, prompting her to reveal the succession of internal dramas. In fact, the decision not to invite Ms Woolliams had taken place before any of them had happened. A letter dated August 28 had offered her seats to any *Ongin* performance except the "youth night" of September 28, not mentioning the possibility of a Royal Presence on that occasion.

Once the story had become public, Ms Woolliams decided to head her silence on the topic of the Australian Ballet from which she resigned after a disagreement with management in 1977. She did so in a letter to the Age. This is the text of it.

"I would like to express my concern for the health of the Australian Ballet. This is a company of fine dancers who are capable of producing performances equal to the best in the world.

"Your dance critic's perceptive review of Tamara's premiere (July, September 28) highlighted *A Good Omgin*. That Omgin To Be Better and I feel he has a point. I also feel that audiences are being cheated of the experience that this highly individual and company owes the public at large.

"Of the principals appearing on the second night, Mr Neil Jillet (the critic notes of me, that the 'second intention' to make Tamara very as well as dramatic sometimes lack her originality, and that the other is made up to be a 'ballet', rather than a 'dramatic Omgin'. Both principal parts must be far removed from the essence of the central characters as seen by Pushkin or Cranko.

"In view of my reluctance to rehearse these otherwise moderately accomplished dancers — for the very reasons mentioned in your article — the management accepted 'at some inconvenience to the Stuttgart Ballet and considerable expense, to the Australian Ballet, a dancer from Stuttgart to coach these artists in the roles of Tamara and Ongin. Upon my withdrawal from a situation that became disastrous, he did undertake the supervision of preparation for the Melbourne season generally.

"I think the public should know that at this time there were three well prepared and, according to Sydney reviews of the April performances, successful ones too.

the ballet from amongst the prominent Australian members of the company.

"Are these policies either economic or sound? Is the morale of the dancers in a condition where serious artistic endeavour can be expected? Surely these members of the public, with genuine interest and concern the dance should now ask if the management of the Australian Ballet is using public money to promote artistic standards or flapping a commercial project to the detriment of the dancers.

## THE MAGIC OF DANCE

By the time you read this, you may have viewed a couple of programs from the series *The Magic of Dance*, presented by Margot Fonteyn. My advice is to catch all Thursday night activities except staying home in order to watch the rest. This is being shown around Australia from 8.00, at 8.30 pm.

Admittedly, at the time of writing, I have seen only the first one, but I am confident that its quality and fascination will be maintained by the rest. The archival material along a watch seeing Isadora Duncan and Ruth St Denis don't turn up on the screen at any old time. Nor will we ever see again the dance magic of Bolshoi and Baryshnikov, at the peak of their performing careers — except through film records like these.

It was surprising to find the segments from the varied dance works were, long enough to be satisfying and delightful to see how elegantly and successfully Margot Fonteyn handled the commentary. The wife is intended for general viewing so there is no complicated verbal detail, the two parts are all there to be seen. The words simply give you the picture in broad sweeps and a feeling for the magic that can be dance.

Margot Fonteyn in *The Magic of Dance* series.



# DANCE

# Info

by Jeff Stryker

Looking back over the past couple of years, Australian dance has had quite a surprising amount of exposure, or so says The Sydney Dance Company, has been in America. It's London and Hong Kong. The Australian Ballet went to China and Mexico. The first urban dance theater was featured in the 1990 Exchange Festival.

Somewhat less publicized was an extraordinary tour made last July by a group of Aboriginal dancers. They went to Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York and Washington performing in student venues and giving workshops.

Initially, the tour was organized in such a way that the Aboriginals in those cities had better opportunities than urban Americans to see Aboriginal dance, that is, as staged programs rather than the sort of Anthony Wallis, manager of the Aboriginal Artists Agency, limited one of the four organizations which presented the tour, explains how that happened.

On 26 performers included the community elders of each of the three groups who took part. Since Aboriginal dance is a total group activity, it's important to bring all the right people to choose the selection of dances, if you can afford it. In terms of Australia, no one has been able to

"Every program in America was crafted by these elders according to how they felt on the day. The dancers don't want to do the same thing every day, and even during the performance, themselves, the elders might change the choice of works to be done. The elders sit at microphones giving instructions to the dancers and introducing the dances, often in their own language, which Lance Bennett translated.

Lance Bennett is director of the Aboriginal Cultural Foundation which, with the Aboriginal Artists Agency and the Papunya Tula Artists, made up the group of Australian presenters. The Australian Government provided \$120,000 for the venture

# ABORIGINAL DANCE IN AMERICA



*Member Margaret White, a dancer from the Torres Strait Islander Dance Troupe, with Sydney Aboriginal dancers at the Sydney Park, New York. Photo: Greater Artists.*

through the Australia Council for the Arts and the Department of Foreign Affairs, Customs and Bush Pilot Airways also helped.

The American side was master-minded by Spider Kedelsky, director of the Los Angeles Dance Festival/Gnomco Dance Foundation. He matched the Australian financial investment with the assistance of the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts and Mobil Oil—and local communities in the areas they visited.

The response from their audiences was exciting. On campus at the University of California and Los Angeles, there had expected 500 but 1,200 came, leaping up and cheering at what they saw. In Washington, they



feature

performed in a large park outside the White House. In New York they danced in Central Park, Battery Park and Harlem. In San Francisco the *Indianapolis Journal* reported that the crowds flowed on to the performing area to embrace the dancers after the performance. It was a spontaneous outpouring of appreciation as only an enthralled Berkeley audience on a warm summer day can demonstrate.

Everywhere they went, the message of the Aboriginal Cultural Foundation Chairman, Nandjearra Amagula, was impressed on people: "We tribal leaders are very pleased to have been invited to the United States of America, to show the American people that we still keep our traditional cultures strong. All traditional songs, dances and music are owned by tribal clans which belong to particular areas of land. The Ancestral Heroes of the Dreamtime created these forms for every different local clan to keep as sacred trust."

"We have never felt the need to form a national traditional theatre company to build up our identity as tribal people because we have never lost our identity. The clan leaders have simply chosen certain dancers and singers, and made a selection of certain public-sacred

dances and songs especially for this visit to America."

A well-illustrated program introduced the groups from North East Arnhem Land, Western Cape York and the Northern Territory Coast, south of Darwin. It told the dances from which they would make their selection and gives some indication of their content. "Spots of the dead dig for worms." Bird and animal dances such as pelican, shark, seagull and wallaby. "The surface of the blue sea is torn by leaping fish." The significance of some of the dances is also briefly explained.

The presence of Aboriginal artists on their visit caused a great many American journalists to write eloquently. The *Washington Post* latched on to the headline "Original Aborigines With a Bionic Beat" and the *San Francisco Chronicle* was quite overwhelmed.

"Here we were, confronted with bizarre creatures performing songs and dances drawn from a nearly pure tradition that goes back 30,000 to 40,000 years. The entire experience was awesome. When the first contact is made with life on other planets, it's doubtful that the experience will be more astonishing."

Not everyone was quite so open-mouthed. One of the most rewarding things was the serious interest of the dance critics in New York. Deborah Jewitt gives them the close attention she lavishes on contemporary groups, describing their movements in detail.

"Stylistic distinctions between the two are hard for a foreigner to pick out," she writes. "The Cape York people hold long, long sticks, but both groups make open-throated gestures. The Cape Yorkers do a lot of standing in place, feet apart, jerking both knees inward out, but the Arnhem Landers do some of this too. Everything seems tense and limited in scale, not much space covered, a few repeated movements in each dance, few claps, together descending notes in each song, very short songs (some under a minute).

Sometimes a shuck or a head-like vibration by the singer indicates that only two beats remain. These short

song-dances can be repeated or varied, I think, and strung together to make a longer piece. But the rhythm and performance energy is dropped in between repeats, performers shift around, look at each other, murmur. Will they do more? Maybe yes, maybe no."

Marcia Siegel described them as "this summer's most interesting foreign visitors" and Clive Barnes wrote: "This is raw dance dancing in its original mode. There is a human measure, much more a human dignity, in this kind of dance than more specified choreographic vocabulary can possibly muster."

The *New York Times* allowed space for several stories on the visit, and its chief dance critic, Anna Kisselgoff, wrote a studied Sunday piece on the background of Aboriginal dance as well as the performances on view.

Jari Rytman, director of the Netherlands Dance Theatre, was in America at the time and was quick to publicise the Australian performers. Aboriginal dancing, he said, "has the kind of incredible intensity and incredible seriousness of performers for whom dance really is the most important thing in their lives. It is a real material possession of theirs. And in Australia, the fusion of music, dancing and landscape is so perfect that artistic triangle is really there."

Rytman is one of the few non-Aboriginals who have seen Australia's original people dancing in their own environment. He attended a dance festival on Groote Eylandt last year and is choreographing a full-length ballet inspired by what he saw. It will be premiered in Holland.

And what are we in Australia doing to record and encourage the perpetuation of the Aboriginal dance traditions? Apart from shining them with America, all too little. As an Australian, I am embarrassed to admit that the few analyses of Aboriginal dance I have seen in popular form should have come from overseas newspapers.

1988 is nearly here. Couldn't we have a tour like this a little closer to home by then?



## ADT Sydney season — mixed reactions

by Bill Shoemaker

Reactions were mixed on the Sydney debut of the Australian Dance Theatre, some detested the theatrics and longevity of the dancers while admiring the creative risks in their repertory programme others found the company in general refreshing and new to the Australian Ballet and Sydney Dance Company, while others still were rather disgusted by a somewhat flat unimproving greenness about the dancers that led folks to think that life must be pretty good these days in Adelaide.

There are parts of all three reactions that I share, the debut wasn't the earth-shaking success that some had thought it would be, but neither was it unimproving or uninteresting.

Having just seen ADT for an extended period over two years ago, I feel it safe to say all of the signs of falling into the same hole that many overseas small companies have fallen into. It is that dangerous area called the ensemble.

In part and for a variety of reasons, it is conservative and necessary to build up a repertoire around a certain ensemble of dancers, they give the works depth and authority, but what happens when some of the dancers leave the ensemble? Either the works that were reliant on certain dancers have to be shelved or the leader has to go through the tedious process of teaching the works to new dancers, with no great assurance that they will have the same impact. This is what has happened to at least two works in the current ADT repertoire, Taylor's *Whispers* and Bruce's *Labyrinth*.

Because Alan Israel has left the company, the lead male part in *Whispers* is taken over by Robert Canning, who, perhaps because of familiarity or of learning the part second-hand is over-mime (which becomes extremely wearying in due course) and is therefore one dimensional in his attack. Also because of Joe Scoglio and John Blake no longer dancing one of the other three lead parts the concept and choreography, when they enter the drama are over-actuated rather than forcibly apparent.

Of *Whispers* itself, taken in some (and because the AETI made it the "big sell" of the season), it still retains its stone-cold,

glacial sexuality, but the dance is starting to come unspooled. It is wearying then, which is hardly surprising, since Nigel Troika's obscuration and pallid was there in the first place. Frankly I think it's time the company put the work to bed for a nice long rest.

The lack of depth and cohesion in Christopher Bruce's *Labyrinth* can also be put down (in part) to the turnover in the company, the other part could have been due to one little rehearsal.

The theme is still powerful, an starting point being the Minotaur legend and continuing into deep mental and spiritual corridors, but the dancing is haphazard. Christopher Bruce created the lead part in Glen Tetley's *Paros Lullaby*, he is an avowed fan of Tetley's style and that shows in *Labyrinth*. Many of the Tetley turn-points are there, the "archaic swirling" gipples that suddenly, and for no choreographic reason, burst out into runs and high held lifts. That style is romanticized and intensified into Bruce's own style and because of that, and because the ballets are at such a high emotional volume, there has to be a rigorous and careful sense of pacing or else it just becomes frantic. There was little pacing in the recent revival and it was brutal.

Consequently, Taylor's *Fidherbia* is a story of even funnier than it was when I witnessed its premiere and that is because the work is always growing in width and in subtlety, it is a constantly evolving amalgam of a ballet, and any change of personnel will put its own stamp on it.

Which brings me to my second point of the dangers of 'ensemble' companies. Putting so much emphasis on creating works solely out of their collective ranks, especially encouraging mimicry and sometimes untidy talent to choreograph, they run a danger of getting a load of works which if not quite downright repetitions and plagiarisms, are however more than a little uninteresting.

Margaret Wilson, for example, has in *Paradoxes* her first "professional" ballet, managed to transmute the ideas and spatial sense endemic to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

She puts three characters in lights and increases on a bare stage, she gives them a couple of chances to carry around and play with and misact them with a feeling of people mindfully in transit. In place of dialogue she uses its own tell. She has a series of hard power games soundlessly enacted and has of dancing slowly re-



review

Copyright © 1981 by Australian Dance Theatre

turning as if they're on a treadmill. All well and good but then, towards the end, she gives the three characters a section of Strauss performance: very fast post de bras runs, high leaps and turns. Strauss was reminiscent of the great nonstop speech of Lucky in the Brecht play but the trouble is that unlike speech, the dancing is somewhat uncomprehensible and senseless because she has given it structure, pace and timing. It's a well thought out pas de trois and not a huddle on the dance floor. She has, hitherto, been careful to maintain a structured score and order has come into a structureless world: one doesn't know what to make of it or where to put the feet.

Over and above this, there are choreographic circumstances in *Le Sacre du Printemps* or Scoggin's ballet (those stiff shoulders, drooping arms, hunched backs, angular spin traps and smirks, frowning). This is what I mean about creative verbs and it is worrying. If she can arrive at a kernel of unique dance language (Wilson out of Taylor/Scoggin or in Paul Taylor out of Martha Graham) we have a choreographer, presence to look forward to.

Basically speaking, Joe Scoggin is a consequent, he is not afraid of BIC musical pieces (late Beethoven using guitar, Debussy's *Le Mer* and now Mahler's *Song of the Earth*) which is refreshing when so many choreographers shy away from them (I hope he'll do something for a Strauss score for that man's centenary next year).

Chris Walker, Margaret Wilson, Pamela McIntosh, Brian Martin, Linda Gao, and Pamela De Looze in Scoggin's *Winter* by lighting.

What I also hope is that he will learn to walk around words, this music and not stand around in front of it as he has done in the past. I can't speak of the Beethoven ballet but the *Le Mer* ballet for the BIC drowned him, and the Mahler score now has him sweating furiously.

Mahler's *Song of the Earth* which Scoggin has used for his *Winter* is 'great' is a big score with a myriad traps and turbotisms, within it for the choreographer Scoggin's ballet is subtle and bacchic. Mahler's cycle is about spiritual and emotional march. Scoggin has run over the full score and therefore apart from such smaller weaknesses of a masterpiece, the ballet cannot work because it is not odd with no music (but Scoggin ever listened to the music in the Mahler score?). Surely he could have used more apt material from the same composer? *The Goodbye Waltz* has perhaps of Scoggin's *Winter*.

To anyone knowing the music, the ballet is a piddling apology: therefore one has to discover the longest the music to get to the ballet. For the latter is in a lovely ballet. Scoggin knows how to build his moments in terms of architecture, placement, delineation and focus. He can make dancers look like real people on stage not just signals. He can build a palpable world. It is just that what he says has little bearing on what the music is saying or doing, the emotions and events in the ballet are an approximation of the music but they are hopelessly delayed.

Jonathan Taylor's *Enlightened Night* differs from the same kind of ballet that

exists only in the same verbs and arm motions and means to the following (will) out in the proscenium.

While most of the company rush and-leap on and off the stage, creating tension merely by the action and not by any created gesture (Margaret Wilson and Ronald Van den Berg go through the scenario, extended pas de deux of transgression, guilt and forgiveness which personalized the poem that inspired the music originally. They treat a passion to action with breathtaking leaps and spins and gyrates, involved little that can-Believe the Bolshoi in their grandiloquence. It is tedious to watch very big very theatrical but ultimately very one dimensional, just like ballet as a whole. It is a masterpiece but a masterpiece of theatrical fusion.

The same choreographer's *Enlightened Night* is worlds away from all this but it too is theatrical — very.

It is a journey into the spiritual lower depths of modern-day youth. It is hard headed, heavily faced and violent emotionally, brutal but full of compassion.

As an idea, an evolution of illustration and expression in modern day youth it is brilliant. But with its choreography, music (Brian Eno) and costume (most models de pompier) it is a ballet that will date very quickly. Some have likened it to something called *The Fall* (see) but the sense of that work is of a violent commitment, leading within itself, this ballet is of social conflict's violent against everything and nothing.

There is much that is direction, splendor, authority and the spiritual void.

Much as has been made of the obscure language in the pas de deux (moments of stark contrast) with tortured writhings of body but the words are immaterial for it not necessary that you understand them just the feelings that generate them.

The pas de deux is the violent centre of the work but the closing is the climax, the saddest part of all. Each of these isolated victims reaches out to another but each in vain is spurned. Having the work has won its visual convenience on its level but it is here that one sees under the droplet to the modernness beneath.

If there could have been more drawings of these, reporters' ballets in the modern season rather than having them just squashed in at the end of Williams can we could have got to know more about the Australian Dance Theatre. As is, I hope they will return again next year — Sydney, work to see what like this as well as the SAC.



## ACT

**HUMAN VEINS DANCE THEATRE**  
Playhouse (4964488) *End Of A Dream*  
On past standards, this should be an  
interesting evening. Nov 12-21

## NSW

### ABORIGINAL ISLANDER DANCE THEATRE

Footbridge Theatre (Uluru Theatre),  
Sydney Uni (8607571) Traditional  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
dance and modern dance on the theme  
of unity between Aboriginal and  
Islander people. Nov 25-26

### AUSTRALIAN BALLET

Regent Theatre (2547933) *Swan  
Lake* producer Anna Wollans  
designer Tom Lingwood music by  
Tchaikovsky. Worth seeing this old  
favourite for its strong production.  
Nov 3-23

Opera Theatre. SOH (20588) *The  
Hunchback of Notre Dame* producer  
George Ogilvie choreographer Bruce  
Wells designer Kristian Fredrikson  
Sydney's first look at the national  
company's latest full-length venture.  
Starts Nov 27

## NT

### DANCE MOB

A new Christmas production yet to be  
named. Starts Nov 30

## TAS

### TASMANIAN DANCE COMPANY

(316878) Will tour primary and secondary  
schools in Nov with programs tailored  
for each. Choreography by Graeme  
Watson Louise Burns Jenny Kinder  
Christine Babinekas Bob Thorpey  
craft and Neil Adams

## VIC

### AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY

*Emancipate* choreographed by Ron  
Baker and Pop Music choreo-  
graphed by Chris Jannides. At  
Springgong — the Geelong Festival  
Nov 1

### AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE

National Theatre (5340221) *Focus  
Dream* A new work choreographed by

John Blakey Margaret Wilson and  
John Salisbury in an unusual  
collaboration. Nov 15-20  
**DANCE EXCHANGE**  
M8 Theatre (862/22218) Natalie  
Haskell and Russell Dumas in  
performances by Australia's leading  
post-modern group. Nov 4-5  
**MOVING ARTS** (4199663)  
Performances in schools throughout  
Nov

## WA

### WA BALLET COMPANY

His Majesty's Theatre (3276255)  
*Cinderella* choreographed by Garth  
Welsh. Nov 23-28. School  
performances Nov 17-20 at 2.45pm

*Robert Carrington is Margaret Mahon's  
Penelope*







# JOHN HARGREAVES — making his mark

by Elizabeth Riddell

If the Australian film industry had stars, which it doesn't, John Hargreaves would undoubtedly be one of them. Hargreaves himself believes that the star system does not suit local producers, and possibly not local audiences. A few American performers, mostly women, will inspect screens, but on the whole no kind of film, that holds any office figure.

Now does he think Australian producers are attracted to the idea of a romantic leading man, though they might change if somebody as magnetic as Robert Redford turned up. The Redfords are, however, the end result of careful planning. They are programmed within a risk of their lives in the local industry, each career in management is an endorsement of Hargreaves's Bill Sharathan case of Sharathan Management who has a formidable stable of actors, actresses, writers, directors, composers, and choreographers have to do the best they can.

I met John Hargreaves in Bill Sharathan's office on a cool spring afternoon. He had just come from the Bondi car, and consequently exhibited a faint blue tinge. Recovered by a cup of coffee, he said he needed the exercise because being back on the stage again — as Brick in Tennessee Williams' *Car* — was difficult after working for several months in film.

"In fact I think filming is easier than appearing on stage. It's less sustained. You can make a mistake then live to do it again. Not too often, of course. Australian films being made on the end of an old rag, with insufficient time for rehearsing or even thinking about what you are doing.

"I remember I like work in film and I think I'm better at film than at theatre. Yes, well, you have to go back on stage

now and again to prove to people that you're not just a dumb film actor. There's a certain amount of such value attached to the stage.

"I used to think this acting for stage and screen was the same kind of work, using the same techniques, but I soon got over that. On stage, I'm very conscious of audiences. They're all different, and I enter a society."

Hargreaves is in his thirties, and conscious that he has to make his mark now as what he calls a "showcase leading man". Two films for which he was contracted have just shut up shop, at least temporarily, as backers have pulled out in dissatisfaction with the Government's tax rebate features. His next film is a 45 minute feature, to be made by Meg Foreman, called *Last Tango in Paradise*. It is a two-hander, and his partner will be Purne Hackforth-Jones.

Hargreaves was born in Moreland, Victoria. "I come from a long line of bookkeepers and saw cockies," he explains. "The family moved to Cammerajong, outside of Sydney — three cottages, and everybody grew their own vegetables and kept chickens — and I went to the Marist Brothers' school at Kogarah, my mother being a Catholic. Anyway, she was a nun before she went over the wall and married father."

"The Marist brothers taught me to say 'hatch' but there was one wonderful English teacher, Brother Elgar. Brother Elgar also taught John Bell when he was attached to the Marist school at Manly."

"I thought I wanted to go to university but I didn't get a Commonwealth scholarship. In fact I didn't know what I wanted to do, except vaguely be a writer of some sort. A vocational guidance shop told me I should become a meat-fitter, something I don't think I'd heard of at the time. Couldn't I be a writer, I asked? No, I'd lose any flesh or become a homosexual, at the very least."

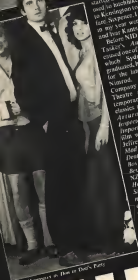
"In the end I got into the Teachers' Training College at Wagga, and was a school teacher for four years. But I knew it was only temporary. I kept writing — poetry and so on — but also applied for NIDA, and got it. The school paid the fees and I kept myself alive teaching in night. Wendy Hughes



Hargreaves with Tim, from *Car*



feature



John Hawkesley in *Don in Don's Party*

and in series and single plays for the ABC. He plays the lead in the innocuous series about a country vet, *Young Ramsay*.

Hawkesley likes money, but not enough to accept a role in which he does not feel comfortable.

"I like to work with people who are very good at what they are doing," he says. "Judy Davis, for instance. She goes, everybody working to work with a capacity. And I prefer to work with a director who will really direct me. At least if they tell you what they want you can argue about it, because an idea or two will filter through. If they don't tell me what they want I tend to do it my way, which may not always be right."

I suggested that *Don's Party*, written by David Williamson and directed by Bruce Beresford, was the film in which he probably gave his best performance.

"Yes, that's what people say, but I have never been satisfied with the way I played *Don*. I don't think I got *Don* right, especially towards the end of the film. Beresford was great to work with. I would always want to work with him again. I just think I did not get the character quite right."

"Funny thing about *Don's Party*, it got me a lot of Israeli love. When I was in Cannes doing my bit for *Don's Party*, I would come up to me and hands, congratulating me, and he then I met the cause of it all, a young Israeli who had bought the film. For nothing, for nothing," he kept saying, "and now for a 16 week season in Israel."

"He made a packet out of it and it made me famous in Tel Aviv, at least."

"I just hope the railway keeps going. We all live from hand to mouth but it's rather exciting, especially as the excitement seems to have gone out of the theatre since the great dirty days of the Prawn Factory and *Shiraz*."

"I would like to work overseas, for a change of pace, but I've turned down two films, one of them in Singapore, because I don't think they would do me any good. There is no point in appearing in a bit of well-paid trash. But I will make a film next year in Europe for a French group who showed one of their films at Cannes in the market place. It will have an international cast and crew and English dialogue."

started at NIDA at the same time. We used to hitchhike from Taylor Square and Keir Elington to the school to catch the last *Suspense*. I suppose it was. Others in my year were Pamela Stephenson and Ivan Kants."

Before NIDA he had a part in John Tucker's *America Harrah* which caused one of those temporary suspensions which Sydney is noted for. Having graduated, he worked at different times for the late lamented Old Time at Night, for the State Theatre Company of SA, the Independent Theatre and the Stables in contemporary Australian plays and such classics as *A Month in the Country*, *Amadeus*, *U. The Government Inspector*, *Man of Mode and The Importance of Being Earnest*. His first film was Macquarie Park's and Tom Williams' *The Rembrandts*, followed by *Mad Jack Morgan*, *Don's Party*, *Deathchewers*, *Long Weekend*, *Editor Rex*, *Lust*, *The Gold Angel*, *Shut Second Reasonable Doubt* (made in NZ and not yet shown in Australia), *NZ* and not yet shown in Australia), *Handstand* and *The Killing of Angel*. Two diversions were *Indiscretions* and *The Killing of Angel*. *Indiscretions* a semi-documentary made about the distribution of foreign aid in Indonesia, and the remarkable short feature, *Morris Lovers Jack*, made by Sonia Holliman.

Hawkesley has appeared in one or more episodes of almost every long-running commercial television series

# A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

## Kathleen Norris of the AFI talks to Elizabeth Riddell



Kathleen Norris

feature

When Kathleen Norris takes over the running of the Australian Film Institute this month (November) she will be returning, in an odd kind of way, to the place where she started. Her first paid job was selling tickets at Cinescapes, Ohio. She got the job because her current boyfriend was and even yanked her away from the glamorous world of films, but she never quite recovered from the initial impact.

"I love films, I have always gone to films just as I have always gone to the theatre," she says. "I'm knowledgeable about them, but I could not claim to be a film scholar. I would never qualify as a curator, say, of a film archive like I'm a quick study. I have always known where to get the information I need, and I do have a gift for enthusiasm. The pity is that Peter Clayford, who had been in the job of Executive Director only since March and who had just begun to get his plans for expansion of the AFI into gear, had to resign because of illness. The feeling of the Institute's board was that it has got to become more stable, more of a presence in places other than Sydney and Melbourne, where it is well known and respected, and Peter was carrying out this policy."

The AFI's resource centre — the George Luger Library and the Vincent Film Library — is in Melbourne, but it has always had the character of a non-distribution alternative to commercial showings in the Langford cinema in Townsville and the Opera House in Sydney, where it shows films for 40 weeks of the year.

The AFI's business is to maintain the libraries and the National Film Theatre and run the National Film Awards. For the past five years these have been presented with and by the ABC. Miss Norris is not about to discuss whether or not she finds the formula acceptable, but I can con-

sciously predict some change of tone in the future.

"I suppose you could call me an arm administrator by trade," she says. "Ten years ago in America, as I believe in Australia, there was no such animal as the learned by default. A stage manager might find himself with the chequebook, which automatically made him administrator of the company. Since then training schemes have been set up, but that is the way we learned it."

I asked Miss Norris, who is tall, blonde, elegant and very easy to talk to, if it was true that, as manager has it, she has a special talent for getting money out of the private sector in other words, fund-raising.

"Well, I'll tell you. My last job was as Executive Director of the New Dramatists, an organisation founded to help emerging playwrights through the mechanics of the business, such as readings, script analysis and estate discussions with professional theatre people. Our budget was £300,000, only 10 per cent of this came from Government and we actually had no earned income, being non-profit-making. So about 90 per cent of the budget in any single year came from the private sector. But of course people who give you money are not under altruists; they have to get some return — prestige, interest, enjoyment, whatever. And that return has to be visible in some way."

"The AFI is central to the film industry in Australia. It's a service organisation that needs to be a lot better known, and not just in Melbourne and Sydney."

Kathleen Norris does not think that anyone will regret the fact that the top AFI job has gone to an American.

"After all, we complain," she says, "that we are not visitors. Patrick is engaged for five years to the Opera. We are committed to Australia, and very happy to be here. I always meant to work, because I always have worked, I applied for the job when I saw it advertised, and I am pleased to have it. I think it is a great opportunity. There is a lot of the entrepreneur in me, and I hope that quality can be used as the AFI is perceived to be central to the development of the film industry."

"Anyway, my first move must be to go to the film industry and discover what needs it has that the AFI might supply."

## Angel Street — a sad surprise

by Elizabeth Alexander

The *Killing of Angel Street* has many of the qualities associated with the work of Donald Crombie, its director: sympathy and a kind of racial affection for the less controlled areas, an almost poetic feeling for place shared with few other Australian directors, with the exception of John Duigan. In this film his characters scuffle or struggle or wander around the crowded surfaces of the inner-suburbs, through their lives. The street life of such a suburb, even allowing for the intrusion of the middle-class executives and their families, is well perceived and individualised. So it is all the more unfortunate for the construction of the film when melodrama in the shape of a smash over in dark places the characters of greater interest — are by now in better men and women but similar shades stepping out of one to him or her at the moment. Finally the movie flounders as the highway office, a stereotype of the most banal kind. The overall is completed, simple propaganda has pushed its way out the window. This is mistake made Crombie.

The story is about Jennifer Summons, returned from abroad to find her somewhat eccentric, ageing dad hanging on in his little house in Angel Street and leading a band of angry residents. When he dies is the deliberately not the determinant to find out why and who, with the aid of a union leader, Jeff Elliott.

Neighbours rally and get beaten up for their trouble; her brother has a kind of roller coaster on his North Street town, a dog belonging to a sympathiser is cruelly killed. It's a lament of a kind that constantly exists in such situations, but told with much proboscidity, minus any descent of corpse.

Elizabeth Alexander, badly served by much criticism, does the clever, but appealing modern romance, achieves a kind of victory by the time she does. Jeff Elliott has been killed. John Hargreaves that sometimes verges on indifference and contrasts with the picture of Stefan and the bus of Loma on a shelf in the town office.

Alexander. A real bit of a Daddy Summons, complete with emotion shop windows, rock and trolley is a character.

used to a Ray Lee's version of a union activist who has some greater days. There are some good characterisations among the supporting players on Jennifer's side, but the developer/lover are strictly ban-the-union types.

It is a fact that the kind of attention focused in *Angel Street* occurs in big cities everywhere, and that local groups of residents have had considerable success in fighting off those who want to alter the landscape with high-rise buildings with no thought or care given to the fate of the street. Crombie's straight up and down service of events is a gripping story, the dialogue is often flat, anomalous, absurd. However, it can still be enjoyed as a superficial level for the presence of Elizabeth Alexander and John Hargreaves and for the vigorous drama seems, not to suggest by Crombie and his producers.

The film was financed largely by the Australian Film Commission and the Greater Union Organisation, which will distribute it. Public opinion is unpredictable. Crombie's *Twelve* was a critical and commercial success. On *The Professor* made little impact and *Carly's Child*, a performance by Michelle Fawcett, had almost no public recognition although Australian critics praised it. The booklet *Twelve* continues in the making *Twelve* and the *Professor*.

review



Alexander and Hargreaves on the set of *The Killing of Angel Street*, including Jeff Elliott, Alexander and John Hargreaves.



Alexander and John Hargreaves on the set of *The Killing of Angel Street*.

Timothy Hutton and Kevin Bacon in *Heavenly Creatures*



## WATCH FOR THESE...

# guide

**Peepes** comes at the end of, and puts paid to, the recent spate of films made from comic strips. Robin Williams, Mork and Mindy makes a marvellous squawking spinachophone and Shelley Long might have been created to Duval's might have been created to play the role of Olive Oyl. Paul Dooley plays Wacky. The film doesn't always come off, but Jake Parker's script and Robert Altman's direction ensure that you won't be bored.

**To Forget Venice** is an guest-starred film by the Italian director Brunati, by the Italian director Brunati, by the Italian director Brunati, by the Italian director Brunati, by the Italian director Brunati. You may have to search for it among the art houses, but it's worth the effort.



Susan Sarandon and Kevin Bacon in *Atlantic City*, USA.

**Atlantic City** has the Frenchman Louis Malle, who made *Pretty Baby*, directing Burt Lancaster, Susan Sarandon, Kate Reid and others in a not-to-be missed story set in the resort that was once the mob's

hometown and is now the Vegas of the east coast. Lancaster plays an ageing, likable ex-fiddler who was never the man he thought he was. Sarandon an innocent from Wisconsin working in a fish cafe and learning how to be a crookier, her eyes set on Marvin Cato, a wonderfully effluviante, if not a bit of a John Garre and splendid cinematography by Richard Gough.

**Head Over Heels** is the funniest romantic comedy of the year, much less hearty than *The Four Seasons*, directed by Helen Mirren. Burt Lancaster and Mary Beth Hurt (of Woody Allen's *Interiors*) and with George Grizzard as Head's mother, lunching scuttly into old age with a blonde rose and actor grows.

**Winter of Our Dreams** is the film that got lost in the rush of awards to Gallop during the most luscious season. Written and directed by John Dumper, it has Judy Davis in her best film role yet and Bryan Brown, who certainly should have been dubbed Best Actor.

**The French Lieutenant's Woman** is the film of the John Fordist book that has everybody very excited, not without reason. The director, Karel Reisz, uses a play within a play to make his points. The stars are the amazing Meryl Streep looking like a Roco's lady, and a stage actor new to films, Jeremy Irons. Enchanting romantic attitudes, in romantic landscapes.

**Chorus of Fire** is a totally original hint by a previously unknown English director, Hugh Hudson, about a couple of runners way back in the 1924 Olympics. The Games were held in Paris, and how busy it all was. **Heaven's Gate** need not be seen only as a curiosity — this rare re-released version of Michael Cimino's four-hour, \$20 million feature — because it has some splendid photography and a marvellous performance, very low-key and beguiling (and unexpected) from Isabelle Huppert as the madame of a bordello in Wyoming. The short version runs for two and a half hours. **Intervista** is a lush Italian melodrama (English sub-titles) by Mauro Bolognini with Dominique Sanda and a glowing, towering Anthony Quinn. Set in Rome around 1800, with no holds barred.

## The Avant-Garde and Wagner

by Fred Maerz

The musical avant-garde can be a source of excitement, stimulation or irritation. It can have the same effectuality to critics as an aphorism has to someone else, or it can act like ketchup powder on the backside of the musical establishment.

It played its heyday in the 1950s and early 1960s. There were days when self-produced musicians played from blank sheets of paper, poured water onto piano keyboards, scraped arpeggiated down music, replaced music notation with photographs, employed electronic techniques which left all musical consequences to chance, scored pieces for such extreme configurations as 600 microphones, placed their faith in computer-generated, multi-channel and ring modulation, used a non-playing piano, and relied on their instructions as the working plan for five minutes providing it is very loud, continuous and produced by feedback.

There were heady days, and the ripple from their upheaved tables, equivalent to inflexible ones for tradition, still lies on the shores of our contemporary music, greatly as modified forms. When they were at their worst (and it is interesting to note that they revealed decline and fall as a world-wide phenomenon), their propensities and propensities took themselves very seriously indeed as the Musketeers of music, and their critics harassed them. I privileged their activities very fully in what developed into a two-part relationship. One of the highlights of this came in October 1975, when I brought down the mighty wrath of the editors of the *Los Angeles Times* regarding its Jackson Pollock special. My correspondent dealt with a Friday morning. Myself, I wrote that weekend the reason for the unapologetically high and bitter, avant-garde music, and its probably well-motivated power.

From avant-garde composers seemed to draw responsibility.

The teachers were those who had responsibility who had not music, and who had the responsibility to be responsible to their students. The teachers were not the students with electronic gadgetry, the inspiration

depended on the twaddling of kinks. The gamblers left musical results to chance so that any single piece never sounded the same twice; they would have supplied a musician with a 15 penknife in the hope that he would write a Shakespearean drama. Category Four were the boasters, some deliberately deceived the public others boasted themselves as well working on the Emperor's Clothes principle, persuading governments to fund them and critics to discover hidden meanings in their work of which they had been totally unaware.

It was all a fascinating sociological mirror, art, after all, is supposed to reflect society. And the reason for my recalling it was the first Australian performance of the *Symphonia* by Luciano Berio recently pop-uped in the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra with the New Swingle Singers under the direction of Edo de Waart, the Dutch conductor who has proved that women can place their feet as firmly on the conductor's podium as any man could. We heard an excellent performance of a work that harboured a renaissance of avant-garde techniques. The Swingles whistled, chorused, bubbled, declaimed, even sang, in tongues from English to Hebrew (in deference, presumably, to the conductor's nationality) and in styles from Joycean stream-of-consciousness to Schoenbergian sprechstimme from cocktail party chatter to the amplified hubbub of cacophony in an airport departure lounge at peak hours. Not to be outdone, the orchestra heavily reinforced in the percussion department, fought its own battle with intelligibility, frequently having its melodic material if you can call it that on the third movement of Mahler's *Resurrexio* take *Symphonia* which floats in and out like thoughts between dreaming and waking.

But then there was much during the month to put a contented grin of satisfaction on traditionalist visages as well.

In Sydney, for instance, two symphonies that once upon a time seemed to guarantee the unbroken continuance of tradition into the 21st century, Mahler No 4 (1900) and Elgar No 2 (1911) — married well-disciplined and high-spirited performances under Sir Charles Mackerras who gave a farewell of the authority he will be bringing next year to his post as Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. The soloist who appeared with him was the Canadian mezzo-soprano

Joan Patenaude-Yarnell, firm of voice and pitch but not quite attuned to the insistent sobriety of Mahler's poems and Elgar's music in *Les Adieux*.

Good news and bad news continued to help and to hush with plenty of live music from interstate. The good news was the courage of many direct (as distinct from taped and delayed) concert broadcasts conducted by the ABC on FM and AM, and by the volunteer-operated community FM radio station 2MBS, dedicated to serious music. The bad news was an underpopulation (no use an artistic euphemism) which stops me from sending up all but one or two actual live music events. No 10's latest amateur anthology.

The West Australian Symphony Orchestra sounded well-rehearsed compact and keen when Gerald King conducted a in what can be an irksome assignment — partnership for finalists in the ABC Instrumental and Vocal Competitions. The finalists were Jolanta Nagarch, a strong-scented Polish-born mezzo-soprano from Perth and the nimble teenager Rachel Jane Decker. From the Adelaide Festival Theatre came the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra under Jose Serebrier, though not quite immune to ragged chattering, it sounded full of vigour in Brahms No 2 and a romantic Russian-flavoured movement by the conductor Salost was An Tanshaok, naturally confident in the other *Concerto* written for him in the mid-1950s, by Marius. From the same city there was to be heard the very elegant Adelaide Chamber Orchestra, and a baroque program from Musica Viva's recent import, the English Concert with director

Bartholomew Trevor Pincock, apart from a few uneasy early notes and a tiny-sounding keyboard instrument drawn was marvellously buoyant playing. Chamber music was also directly broadcast from Hobart, where three performers Robert and Alexandra Macdonald (violin and harp) and Junc Decker performed works by Gossard and Hindings. And to round in Melbourne where came another ABC Instrumental and Vocal Competition final concert, again with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in a state of competence conducted by the ubiquitous Patrick Thomas and employing Brisbane viola player Brett Dean and Canberra parrot Robert Zoch as soloists. And to

complete the coastal trajectory, there was new music by Brumby and Carr to be heard from Brisbane.

But it was in Sydney on the last day of September that we faced the black-bustard of the month.

This was Wagnerian *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight On The Gods) was revealed to the long, Ring-less Australian public by means of a concert performance following earlier equivalent performances of the second opera of the cycle, *Der Holler* in Melbourne which joined the efforts of the ABC, represented by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and its Conductor-In-Chief-Elton Sir Charles Mackerras to the local resources of the Australian Opera and Philharmonia Society.

The conducting of Sir Charles Mackerras was totally authoritative, and if the orchestral response occasionally harboured a minor staidness — especially in the brass, often cruelly treated by Wagner's scoring — this was hardly surprising. The three Ring-lords for the evening episodes were Rita Hunter as a Brunhilde with penetrating yet constantly smooth soprano tones of great beauty; Bruce Martin as Hagen with a malignancy cutting edge in his force and powerful bass; and Margareta Eliass, equally dramatic whether dressed in black as the second Norn weaving the future of the world or in green as Walkende the Valkyrie who brings Brunhilde unheeded advice from Wotan, troubled chairman of the divine Board of Directors. The chief vocal disappointment was the Nephelin of Jon Weaving. He is a singer who most needs to reinforce the impression left by a far from commanding voice with the lively interaction of stage presence, in a concert venue he emerged as colourless, even unengaged, devoid of the necessary horse quality. The other singers were generally more than satisfactory. Robert Aldman improved steadily in diction and assurance as Gunther, with Nancy Groom as his sister Gutrune, Raymond Myers made much of the brief appearance of the subsequence gold-guardian Alberich, Laura Ellis and Catherine Desai were the other Norns, and Rhonda Bruce, Anne Procter and Evelyn Sander the Nibelung Rhine maidens.

Wagnerians might have had some justification for detecting glimmers of an operatic dawn behind this momentous twilight.





# BOOKS

## Documents to study

**Shopfront Documents**, \$20 plus \$2 p&h from Shopfront.

**The Chapel Perilous**, by Dorothy Hewett. Currency Press, np \$6.95.

**Forensic**, a memoir by Greg McLean. Price Milburn. Currency Press, np \$5.90.

by John McCaffery

I have never seen a production by Shopfront Theatre, and nothing in their latest publication, *Shopfront Documents*, particularly makes me want to, and yet it is one of the most interesting and stimulating theatre publications to have come my way in a long time. This apparent contradiction is explainable largely by the very energy and commitment with which Shopfront pursues its community, youth-centred aims.

Granted that they are firmly rooted in their community (the St George Eastmerry region of Sydney) and that their work at all levels is entirely centred around the kids who own and virtually run the place, there seems very little that Shopfront doesn't do. They have extensive live workshops in a wide variety of theatre skills. They mount full productions in their own fully-equipped 100 seat theatre, they have a Touring Company, they have TV and animation facilities, and they seem to be the most energetic hand-raisers in Australian theatre. Behind all this there is a committed ideology of what fanfiction theatre should play in a community and in the creative and personal development of children. You might call them comic and scenicists if that theatre didn't seem to be surviving so well in these days of financial crisis.

*Shopfront Documents* is described as a "Resource Kit" but it is as much a mammoth self-advertisement, with articles, reports from the Shopfront magazine, roles, synopses and full playscripts, copies of annual reports, even flyers and posters from their more successful shows. It is coloured throughout by the refreshing, lively, relaxed style of all their publicity and enriched by a deep sense of serious commitment, particularly in the personal introductions and articles by Shopfront's guiding spirit, Errol Bray.

It is difficult to know exactly how useful *Shopfront Documents* will be to outsiders. Certainly it is a useful source of ideas and advice as to how to run a community theatre company. As a purely scholarly resource it is an interesting record of one



company's struggle to survive. Like many such accounts of drama and theatre work with children, however, from Heathcote and Slide on, it is very much a personal success story. Not everyone can be Dorothy Heathcote, or even Errol Bray, and there is no reason why they should try. If community theatre is really going to take off, then a way has to be found either to train the charismatic leader-figures it seems so far to require, or to develop a system of running the theatres which does

not need them. So far we seem to be developing a Great Person Theory of Theatre, which looks odd alongside the cooperative, ensemble ideals these Great People aspire to.

*Shopfront Documents* can be obtained from Shopfront, 188 Carlton Parade, Carlton, NSW, 2218 for \$20 plus \$2 p&h, or from the Performing Arts Bookshop in Sydney.

Dorothy Hewett's *The Chapel Perilous* has not so much slipped into an important place in the repertoire as slipped into an important place in the minds of many people who might not otherwise take much interest in the theatre. It is not often revised professionally (what Australian play isn't?) but it is studied assiduously in colleges and universities, and read and discussed widely in the real world outside the professional company. Its heroine, Sally Banner, has become as Jack Hubbard pulled in a number of other contexts, "mythically important in the nation's consciousness".

The play is now re-released by Currency in a completely new edition, proudly stamped on the cover, "Not for sale in Western Australia". The main importance over the earlier editions is the inclusion of all of the original music by Frank Arnold, which is much needed in a strong enough reason for people to look up their old editions and get the new. There is also a new introduction to Dorothy Hewett in which she defends the ending and recounts some of the details of the play's genesis.

Finally there is another playscript in the Price Milburn Currency series of New Zealand plays. Greg McLean's *Forensic* is a piece which used to be called a "strong drama" about the sheer bloody violence of Rugby League as it is played, and it became for the great and noble genre it could have been. Greg McLean used to play Rugby for New Zealand but apparently stopped to write plays. The central character, Forensic, is very unconvincingly written. New Zealand playwrights seem to have a tendency to put in parentheses all the things the characters would have said if they hadn't been interrupted by other characters, and here this is a symptom of the play's main weakness, it is very overwritten and large sections of dialogue are too clever by half. It has an extraordinary closing monologue which must be virtually impossible to play, and which to an Australian reader at least is uncomprehensible to read.

## SHOPFRONT DOCUMENTS

A RESOURCE KIT  
from a Community  
Youth Theatre - essays,  
graphics, posters, notes,  
etc.  
\$20 from-

THE SHOPFRONT THEATRE  
38 CARLTON PDE, CARLTON  
2218, N.S.W.  
Phone: 588 3946

# DAVID PARKER'S 1982 'LIMELIGHT' CALENDAR

These thirteen superbly reproduced Black and White Photographs by this Award Winning Show Business Photographer make an ideal gift for the Ballet, Theatre or Film Lover

The Limited Edition Calendar is 40cm square with each print suitable for framing.

Price \$15.50 plus  
\$2.50 pack & post

Available from  
DAVID PARKER PHOTOGRAPHY,  
14 Lang Street,  
South Yarra, Vic. 3141



**THE PERFORMING ARTS  
BOOKSHOP**  
2nd Floor, Crystal  
Palace Arcade  
590-592 George Street  
Sydney  
Telephone 267 2257

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Australia

\$21.00 POST FREE for twelve issues  
Give a gift subscription and SAVE!  
\$26.00 for two subscriptions  
\$22.00 for institutions

Overseas

Surface mail \* A\$25.00  
Institution A\$35.00  
By air  
New Zealand, New Guinea A\$30.00  
U.K., U.S.A., Europe A\$35.00  
All other countries A\$37.00  
Add \$12.00 for contribution to our mail rates.



## THE SPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 36

### ACROSS

- Miscellaneous telegraph — one of four? (3,7,9)
- This ledge could also be joined (5)
- Hinting cheap addressing over PA system (8)
- Outside the seed record is like a waste (8)
- Patient perceived through a cloud of pollution (4)
- One whom we should forgive? (10)
- Upper crust insectivorous backs Position (4)
- It's as well to find it in total solitude (4)
- Totally rasp notes of disparagement (10)
- The dyemaker's ultimate . . . (4)
- . . . left rule in this set (8)
- Can contain hard mass (9)
- Noised hares found in the valleys (5)
- Viper snake beds scuffle in desert meeting (10,5)

### DOWN

- As water falls from the mountain to leave our dress (10)
- Large bay in approach opens with small bayhouses (5,6)
- Admission point (brief) used in reel (8)
- Toilette she opens unexpected events (8)
- She introduces herself in treacle (4)
- Dark shellfish demonstrative possession (6)
- Clasp around Heather (5)
- Therefore backed into a monster (4)
- Supports combination batches makes 80 secret European breeds (10)

- Basic arrangement of fish in the head (9)
- He could be friendly or festive (8)
- Spots some painted pastries (7)
- He's molested with fifty-one, right? (8)
- Score point for those who picket, we hear (4)
- Centuries seen in Nepal with the naked eye time and again (4)

Name

Address

P/Code

The first correct entry drawn on November 28 will receive one year's free subscription to FA.

The winner of last month's crossword was B Roger-Jones of Lower Beaumont, Qld.





The Sydney Theatre Company

Presents

JOHN BELL as

# Cyrano de Bergerac

by Edmund Rostand

In a new translation by Louis Nowra

with

ROBYN      RON      ROBIN      ANDREW  
NEVIN    HADDRICK   RAMSAY   McFARLANE

Directed by

RICHARD WHERRETT

Set design by

JOHN STODDART

Costume design by

LUCIANA ARRIGHI

Original music

SARAH de JONG

at the

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE  
OPERA THEATRE

NOVEMBER 6 – 21, 1981

Evenings at 7.30 pm

Saturday Matinee at 1.30 pm





# ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

**5-21.MAR.82**

**PREFERENTIAL  
MAIL BOOKINGS  
ARE NOW OPEN  
— SO HURRY.**

You may personally  
collect your Festival  
Booking Brochure in your  
capital city

## SYDNEY

S.A. Government Travel Centre  
407 George Street  
Adelaide's Oldest Theatre  
Jury 150 Bowling Green  
Potts Place  
Museum 40 Clarence Street  
Museum Theatre 300 Elizabeth  
Street, Sydney Hotel

## MELBOURNE

S.A. Government Travel Centre  
20 Elizabeth Street  
Puppet Theatre 60 Elizabeth  
Street

## BRISBANE

ABC Box Office, Grand Road  
National Public House, Corner  
Peters & Victoria Streets  
Corner Saturday  
Queensland Performing Arts  
Trust, Workers Place  
200th Floor 320 Edward Street  
Queensland Arts Council  
100 Mary Street  
Department of Cultural Activities  
4th Floor, Customs House  
Corner George & Ann Streets

## ADELAIDE

Adelaide Festival Centre  
Olympic Theatre, George Street  
Any Music, Ticket Office

## PERTH

Perth Concert Hall  
530 George & Terrace  
Mel. Museum's Theatre 625 Hay  
Street

## CANBERRA

Canberra Theatre, Civic Square  
Canberra City  
Tourist Information Centre  
Centre, London Circuit & West  
River, Canberra City

## HOBART

Tasmanian Theatre Company  
40 Collins Street  
Theatre Royal 20 Campbell  
Street

OR at your local  **Holiday Travel Office** during business hours

9 am-5 pm Monday-Friday 9 am-11.30 am Saturday